THE REIGN OF QUEEN ISYL

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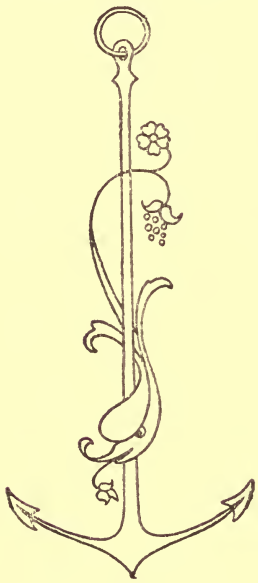
BY GELETT BURGESS
AND WILL IRWIN



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To M. E. G.

With gratitude and loyalty:

G. B. —— W. I.

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EPILOGUE

THE REIGN OF QUEEN ISYL

I

PROLOGUE

¶ HOW *gaffer Golcher sate in his inn and watched the feast of Saint Joseph and those that journeyed thereto: his parley with a knight adventurous, and how they made merry over the goodwife: The Tale of Love Strategic.*

OLD man Golcher sat at the door of his road-house, smoking a corn-cob pipe and studying over a problem in the chess column of the San Francisco "Chronicle."

The landscape lay beaten flat and grey under the retreating sunshine of Santa Clara, the hottest, kindest sun that smiles on California. File on file of green fruit trees, bending like weeping willows under their half-ripe loads, stretched back to the mountains.

Where road met hill, a speck appeared; it dipped into a hollow, was lost, reappeared again. It was

followed by another and yet another. Old man Golcher gazed at the approaching vehicles over his paper, and committed himself to an opinion.

"Blamed, bustin' fools!" he said. Then he fell back into silence, resuming his study of his knight's move, until the first wagon came pulling through the dust and drew up at the watering-trough.

It was a two-seated surrey of ample and matronly proportions. In front, sat a woman formed like her conveyance; through the open throat of her linen duster one could catch a glimpse of pink muslin. The man beside her was also in festival attire; his coat was shiny black, and when, in process of wiping away the dust, he took the protecting handkerchief from his collar, he disclosed a robin's-egg-blue tie of astonishing make. Behind, sat two girls, large, plump, cosey, and most good to look upon. Linen dusters hid their finery, also, but it was suggested by elaborate hats and the white kid gloves they carried in their hands.

"Hello, Bill!" said the man of the party, loosening his horse's check-rein, "where's your store clothes?"

"My store clothes," remarked old man Golcher, deliberately, "is where they've been for goin' on

twenty-two years—in the lower left-hand corner of the cedar chest, about midway up, between the marriage licence and a Bible. I've had no call for any of 'em since. I don't have to get 'em out to know I'm a married man."

"But ain't you goin' to the Fiesta, Mr. Golcher?" asked the larger, and by a shade the prettier of the two damsels.

"I am not," said Golcher, whereat he flicked a horsefly away from his cowhide boots and gazed at the landscape. The slobbering of drinking horses broke a painful silence.

"I am not," he went on. "There bein' ladies present, I ain't givin' my ideas on Fi-estas. But don't you let those darters of yours, John Bates, ever grow up to be Fi-esta queens! If I had a sweet and lovely package of innercence under my protectin' care, an' she was took with the Fi-esta wheel in her sun-bunnit, I'd talk to her in some such caressin' words as this:

"'Look here, darter,' I'd say, 'what you need is exercise an' employment. They's six ton of alfalfa hay that needs mountin' back in the barn. By the time you've done with that, an' washed mother's dishes an' dipped a few boxes of prunes, you'll feel

better. I'm sayin' this for your good, and papa loves you!'"

The prettier girl giggled. Mrs. Bates drew herself up haughtily. "Youth must have its fling," she announced. John Bates gave vent to a laugh, half amused, half scornful, wholly foolish.

"Yes, Queen of Youth an' Beauty, at ten cents a vote!" continued old man Golcher. "It don't make no difference whether she's lop-sided an' freckle-faced an' pigeon-toed an' thin as a rail, she's Queen of Love and Beauty all right, if she's got fool friends enough, an' her dad can deliver the votes, at ten cents per. Say, honest—do you expect old Bob Almeric thinks he's got the 'Drag' cinched any tighter because he dug up a thousand dollars to call himself the queen's pa?"

"Well, you know, Bill," said Bates, with an air that showed where he stood, politically, "the 'Drag' has got to win!"

"They'd do a good sight better winnin' a few councilmen than a Queen of Hate an' Homeliness in a pink silk petticoat," said the old man. "Not sayin' but that Dolly Almeric is as bad as that, if she *is* kind of swelled up since she went to Stanfords. But there you are again; she ain't in the

runnin' with that Shea girl, only old Shea is a blacksmith and Bob Almeric is county boss."

Mr. Bates had fastened his check-rein, and he gathered the lines as he said,

"Well, Bill, too bad you ain't a-goin' to see the show. They say it's goin' to beat anythin' they ever had in California this time; the Sacramento street-fair, water-carnival at Santa Cruz, an' the flower-festival at Los Angeles, even."

"No," the old man replied, "I'll not be amongst them present. I hope you'll enjoy yourself, John; be careful of bunco-men an' don't forget you're a father! I guess I'll have pretty near as good a time as you do."

The girls giggled again, and Mr. Bates drove on. Old man Golcher quietly resumed his paper, but not for long. The vehicles were coming; almost in procession, now; some stopped for water, some exchanged greetings and went on. All were trimmed with flowers and loaded with gorgeous clothes, all bore a festival aspect. Here was a crazy old phaeton, bearing a Spanish family arrayed in violent reds and greens and yellows. Here was a smart trap, its wheels trimmed, rim and spoke, with bright geraniums, manned by a tall,

well-dressed youth with a girl in a correct tailor gown. Here came an enormous carryall at break-neck speed, spilling over with fresh-faced boys, who shook bunting at old man Golcher and barked the Stanford University yell as they passed; working-students these, off to San Jose for a holiday.

Last of all came an open omnibus, filled to the steps with young men in white duck trousers, yellow coats, red sashes and straw hats with elaborate striped bands. Beside the driver was piled a bale of Japanese umbrellas, and the rails of the coach bore this gaudy legend:

"Sutter Commandery, No. 47
Knights of the Golden Gate
Los Gatos"

When this equipage bore down on him, old man Golcher tarried no longer, but hastily got behind the bar and prepared for business. It came with a rush. Fourteen thirsty Knights shoved and jostled and joked and fought for the privilege of paying for the refreshment, with flamboyant Californian good-nature.

"I suppose," said the old landlord, when the glasses were all filled and he himself stood, fur-

nished with a pony of whisky "on the crowd," "I suppose you boys are going to play particular Hades at the coronation to-night."

"Coronation, nit!" said he who had succeeded in paying for the drinks, "the procession goes for us, but no coronation in ours, is there, boys?"

"Not on your life!" they assented, and their spokesman added in explanation, "not after the way they threw down Isyl Shea!"

"Which I take it," said Golcher, "you're a bit sore."

"Well, Bob Almeric will be sorer when he counts the Los Gatos vote next year, if he did try to hedge by making Isyl Shea Maid of Honour. Well, boys, here's to our candidate, the prettiest girl in Santa Clara county, defeated but not disgraced, by ginger!"

The place emptied and the chariot of the Knights of the Golden Gate tore away for San Jose. The sun dropped low and lower. Old man Golcher watered and fed the stock, then built a fire in the kitchen range and set a thin beefsteak frying in water. He laid the table for one in the kitchen, disdaining the white plastered dining-room of his little inn. There he ate, looking out across

the orchards to the lights of the city of San Jose, just beginning to twinkle in the dusk; and as he looked, he shook his head as one who ponders something quite beyond his understanding.

The night fell darker. Then a blaze of red fire glowed between the electric lights; a rocket mounted and ran its stately course skyward. He fancied he could almost hear the distant sound of cheering and the pumping of brass bands. After a final examination of his stock, the old man pulled down the shutters and began to prepare for bed.

Just then, a wheel scraped on the bit of curbing outside the house. In no mood for patrons, now, Golcher kept quiet, listening for the knocking on the door to cease. Instead, it grew momentarily more violent; and then he heard an easy, impudent voice saying,

"Darned if I don't believe he went to the Fiesta after all! Well, we'll have to annex the house and lot!"

"Not my house, you won't!" shouted the proprietor, through the door, betraying himself by his sudden rage.

"Hello! I thought we could make you loosen up," said the voice, as the old man opened the door.

Golcher turned the reflector of his coal-oil lamp upon the visitor, and saw a large, easily built lad of perhaps twenty-four years. From under his cap a shock of warm, Irish hair struggled toward the light. At first sight you realised that he was homely, and at second sight you were glad of it. His chin was aggressive, his nose impudent and his eyes alert and merry.

"To proceed to business," he began; "can you put me onto the course trod this evening by the fairy feet of Mrs. Golcher? I take it that she's not at home, and that you represent the family."

"Oh, certainly, anything you want, of course! Bless you, my child, take my wife, take the house, take the cow, take the prune orchard, but kindly leave me the old apple-tree over in the corner, because my father planted it," said Golcher, sarcasm seeming to him to be the only possible defence. "But if it ain't too much trouble, would you please let me in on who it is that's succeedin' me in the affections of Bee Golcher?"

"Certainly," said the red-haired lad; "I am proprietor, general manager and advance agent of the worst-managed ranch between San Jose and Camp-

bell's, and the proud author of a forthcoming work on 'How to Fail in Prune Farming.'"

"From the description," said old Golcher, "that would be the Parrish place."

"Ting, ting, bull's-eye!" said the stranger in assent.

"The old woman's at her Aunt Helen's, an' if you can get her, it's more'n I can do," said Golcher.

The lad opened the door, and called out to a city hack which was standing in front of the road-house. "Mrs. Winston's—straight ahead for a half a mile, third gate to the left!" he said. "Tell Mrs. Golcher that the cow's got the colic. Tell her Bill Golcher's been elected to the Assembly, and wants to begin rejoicing. Tell her anything. I want her, and Golcher wants her; he don't know it yet, but he will in a minute!"

Stifling with indignant astonishment, Golcher reached for a bung-starter. The young man put his hand in his pocket, and drew out a heap of gold pieces. One by one, he strung them out on the bar until he had counted five gleaming eagles, saying:

"Certain things being likely to happen to-night, that is for the hire of this house till noon to-morrow." He laid down another. "That is for Mrs. Golcher." Another. "That is for the good-will of the concern."

"This is a respectable house——" old Golcher began.

"This deal is straight and perpindicular in every respect. It's on the double dead level and so strictly correct that we've sent for a chaperone. That's why I despatched the Courier of the Czar for Mrs. G. Chaperones are scarce in Fiesta times, but we have gone to this expense to have the best in the county. She's known to be copper sheathed, ninety-proof and comes to us highly recommended by the *elite* of Golcherville. Prithee, am I singing on the key? Do you find my pipe upside-down? Are you with us or forninst us? Speak, or for ever after hold your peace."

"I guess you can count me in," said Golcher, as he swept the gold into the cash drawer.

"Much obliged," said the youth, "you're all right, if you *do* have fits."

"I guess I can afford to set 'em up, on the

strength of that," said Golcher, as he pushed a large bottle across the counter. "Have one on the house." He set out two glasses.

"Well," said the newcomer, "here's to Mrs. William Q. Golcher. She's the Pearl of Pekin and the roseate five-pointed star of the sixty-fifth magnitude. Long may she wave! And it is my glorious hope that when she dawns on the horizon of T. Parrish, Esq., she'll prove to be as good a fellow as you are!"

"Well, I dunno. Mis' Golcher's sometimes considered an acquired taste. She was to me, anyway. It takes time to understand her. But she's the kind that grows on you, if you know what I mean."

"I do not, in very truth," said the lad. "But it sounds horrible. What d'you mean? Say, I hope she won't veto this treaty. What you say goes, don't it?"

"No, sir!" said Golcher, "it don't go an eighth of an inch if the old lady don't like the smell of it! I was twelve years signin' contracts for myself and repudiatin' 'em for Mrs. Golcher, before I learned better. You bought the house, young man, but you ain't bought Mrs. Golcher. I ain't had my

own way since I married her, an' in point of fact, for about six months before that."

"You've got a manager, eh? How *did* you happen to marry her, anyway? Tell me about it. If you can cook up a sparkling storiette to enliven the time till the lady gets here to stop the fun, I don't mind hearing about it."

"How did I happen to marry her? I didn't, by crickety! She married me! I ain't a-kickin', young feller, you want to understand that right at the start. I reckon I'd have died the fool I was born, if she hadn't come along to train me. The old lady is a class by herself, that's all. She's got the qualities of mind and will that made Napoleon the biggest chess champion with live pawns that ever come over the pike. If you want to hear about it, well and good. I'll tell it. It does her credit. She's what the chess experts call a strat-e-gi-cian; I guess that's right. Pull up a chair and take a cigar—you don't need to smell of it too hard—it'll burn, all right."

With his feet on the table, and one hand lovingly nursing his corn-cob pipe, he then began

Old Man Golcher's Story

THE THREE-MILE LIMIT

Or, Love Strategic

I HAD a hound pup once that would eat anything in the world if he only got the idea that you was takin' it away from him. Sawdust or grass or chunks of coal, it made no difference to the pup. Just hold it out, an' make like you was goin' to haul it back again, an' he'd grab it an' sink it so quick he never knew how it tasted. He only wanted it because he couldn't get it.

Now, when I was younger, they was points of resemblance between me an' that pup. That's the only excuse I could ever cook up for my fallin' in love with Matie Kenney.

You see, old man Kenney had a line of fence across our private road. Twice a year my pa used to go out with a shot-gun and take pot shots at old Kenney, while our hired man sawed down the fence-posts. An' twice a year, Kenney would swear out a warrant for pa. It come as reg'lar as Christmas an' Fourth of July. Snipin' Kenneys was the favourite sport of my childhood's happy hours.

Seein' that buckshot is penetratin' an' sometimes

permanent in its effects, I never met Matie Kenney till I was nineteen, when one July day, havin' nothin' particular to do, I went up to take a look at the mines at Almaden. She blew into the superintendent's office with another girl while I was hearin' how amalgam works.

"Miss Willmarth, Mr. Golcher," he says, an' then, "Miss Kenney, Mr. Golcher."

Well, sir, when he said Kenney, I was for dodgin' behind the desk an' drawin' quick, by instinct, but by the time he had finished sayin' Golcher, I was laid out cold. She caught my game complete. I approved of her most cordial. I s'pose it was the hound pup in me, for she was a doll if they ever was one.

She was little, an' kind of chunky an' huggy, with a pink face an' great big black eyes, all smeary dark around the edges.

Now I reckon that when what the lady who gives advice about love in the newpapers calls a normal young man sees what she'd call a normal young woman, the first crack out of the box he begins to wonder what it would be like to own her. Anyway, that's the way it hit me, all of a heap; an' my second idea was that I couldn't have her, not with-

out a blamed embarrassin' funeral. An' so that's what nailed me cold to the proposition that I had to have her.

Well, the Willmarth girl I knew then, some, havin' took her to dances an' so on. She got in, an' worked her converser heavy to make things pleasant, but, all the same, it was Matie Kenney I walked alongside of, when we left the office to look at the quicksilver tanks. Before we got through doin' the sights, Matie had begun to train them smeary black eyes of hers on me, as if I was the whole works, an' I had spoiled the only five-dollar gold piece I had on me, dippin' it into the quicksilver to show her how the amalgam stuck on. It took me two nights roastin' that five over a coal-oil lamp before I got it off, but I would have risked a twenty.

When we got to her buggy to go home, I let her know that I was willin' to enjoy more of her society. Seems like they was a little speck of hound pup in her, too, for she said,

"I generally visit Bee Willmarth Sunday nights." Then I predicted that Bill Golcher wasn't goin' to attend evenin' services next Sunday, very heavy. You bet I didn't, either.

Bee Willmarth fixed it all up. She found business for her pa, an' an engagement for her ma, an' left us alone on the piazza with nothin' but the cat an' a hammock. That was Bee's first move on the chess-board of love, an' I'll bet that even then she could have announced mate in twenty-seven moves, like this here Lasker. But Lord! I didn't suspect nothin'. Why should I? After Matie was gone, I was that grateful that I kissed Bee Willmarth, when I wouldn't have dared to try the Kenney girl. Of course I didn't mean nothin' an' I was miles away from suspectin' how much it meant to Bee.

It was the next Sunday, and the Tuesday after that, and then the Sunday followin' an' then it come in bunches. I had it pretty bad, an' so did Matie, an' for that matter, Bee, too. Over at home, pa growled all the time because I was puttin' in so much time runnin' round with the boys, as he thought, an' over to the Kenney ranch, the old man just thought Matie was studyin' French with Bee.

Well, one day Bee says to me, "The folks will all be away to-morrow; don't you want to come over, an' you an' Matie an' me will get supper?" It sounded so nice an' homelike with Matie an' me

in the kitchen together, that I shivered. I was lookin' at it like a kitchen built for two, Matie an' me, of course, with Bee representin' the hired girl.

If I was teetotally gone on that Kenney girl before, I don't know how to picture the way I felt when I see her in a little pink calico apron wrestlin' with the cook-stove, while Bee tried to show her how. I just sat an' pretended to be peelin' potaters, but all the time I was watchin' Matie. I ain't sayin' she was so dog-gone much on results, though. When she started to beat up some eggs, she sploshed 'em all over her pink apron, which would have looked kind of messy to anybody but a feller as luny as I was. The omelette she made of 'em was an insult to a man's stomach, but I downed it as well as I could. An' the difference between her coffee an' the stuff Bee used to turn out of the pot was certainly wide an' far-reachin'.

On the contrariwise, Bee's biscuits was a dream, an' in twenty minutes by the clock she produced an article of fancy marble cake that just naturally got in close to where a man lives, an' didn't make no fuss there, neither. So, by-an'-by I got in an' jollied Bee's cake an' biscuits a little, just to do the right thing by our accommodatin' hostess, who was

certainly doin' her share to give us a good time. I omitted to speak of the omelette. It touched Matie off like a blast of giant powder, an' she got up an' left the room, mad. I jumped up to follow her, an' she slammed the door. Bee went out an' brought her back after she'd done something or other to her eyes, but Matie wasn't decent to me for the rest of the evenin', an' she didn't even let me take her down to the fence, the way she generally did.

When she was gone, Bee says to me, "Promise me you'll forgive Matie, Will. She does the best she can to control her temper, an' you know cookin' sort of gets on her nerves. She ain't used to it."

"She's got the prettiest little patch of temper I ever saw," I said, an' so she had. About all the Kenney blood that was in her showed up for the month after that. I didn't care. She had me goin', an' a boy of twenty can be so big a fool he can't see the walls when he's inside of the house.

Bee kept fixin' up things so we could be together, but nothin' seemed to suit Matie for a cent. She made fun of my neckties, an' then Bee would pick one of the kind woman-folks think are right, an' wear it a day, an' then offer to swap hers for mine.

I never tumbled, I thought she liked to have it. Matie's one fault was that she had rather big feet, while Bee's was number 2A or somethin' like that. I suppose Bee worked for two weeks in the way only a woman knows how, before she got me to notice the difference between 'em. An' so it went, she surroundin' me with her pawns an' bishops an' bringin' her rooks to bear doubled for the end-game, an' me thinkin', an' Matie thinkin' too, that we was doin' great work. Lord, it was Foreordination against Freewill all over again! It was Paul Morphy against the bummest checker-player in the corner grocery.

Well, about that time old Kenney connected with the fact that somethin' more than a desire for knowledge of French verbs was afflictin' Matie over to the Willmarth place. He investigated, an' found me with Matie's head restin' calm an' unsuspectin' upon my manly shoulder by the golden moonlight. When Matie got home she hit trouble good an' plenty.

Next day, while I was stackin' over in the North lot, a half-breed Spanish boy passed me a note, an' I saw that they had to be somethin' doin' pretty pronto, before old Kenney got after me with

a gun. So I sent back word by the same Dago route, sayin' that now was the appointed time to bust over the line an' get married.

She didn't lose no time, I tell you. She wrote back, "Have a rig at the fence at six, to-morrow morning."

I had a hundred an' fifty dollars tucked away in a cigar-box, an' I got it. Matie had let Bee in on the game, to go along as a witness, an Bee was ready with me at six when I drove up to the Kenney fence. We took the first train out of San Jose for the city.

As luck would have it, old man Kenney come over to the house with a shot-gun to reason with me, before the trail was cold. Pa met him, an' they got a mutual drop on each other, which led to explanations. Which one of 'em was maddest, I have no idea, but the result was that for the first time in their lives, the Kenneys an' the Golchers come to a friendly understanding.

An' so, when I blew into the marriage-licence office at the City Hall in San Francisco, ready to swear my life away that we was both over twenty-one, the clerk give me a look-over, an' called me into his room. He showed me a telegram that

had us described perfect, signed by pa an' old Kenney, an' it said hold us both for abduction.

"See here," says the licence man, rather friendly, "I ain't goin' to have you pulled, for my business an' my pleasure is to promote matrimony, an' not to discourage it. But I can't issue you a licence, because you're both under age."

"What'll I do?" I asked him.

"The reg'lar ordinary, commonplace way to beat this combination in San Francisco," he says, "is to hire a tug an' get married by the captain on the high seas. As soon as you're three miles off shore you don't need no licence. It'll cost you fifty for the tug, an' twenty to square the captain, an' I give you my blessin'."

Well, we chased down to the water-front and I dickered with the skipper of a little pup tug, an' handed my blushin' bride an' my unblushin' witness aboard, an' the voyage begun like a picnic, with everybody smilin' an' joshin' in high spirits.

When we passed Alcatraz, Matie was lookin' as pretty as a peach, an' I was hungry to eat her. When we passed the Fort, she proposed that we keep right on to Honolulu an' spend our honeymoon there. But in about three minutes after that

we started to cross the bar. Ever tried it in a forty-foot tug with a south-west breeze fightin' a racin' ebb tide? Well, don't unless you're about as sure of your inwards as Bee Willmarth was. They was a dirty chop that made the tug roll like a log, an' I noticed Matie wan't talkin' so much as she had been, in the Gate. She seemed to be losin' interest in the conversation, an' she didn't say no more about goin' to Honolulu.

Bee was watchin' her, an' now she chirked up considerable, Bee did, an' she proposed that we go out to the bow of the boat an' get the spray an' more of the jolly pitchin'. Matie just give her one look like she'd proposed to eat raw dough.

You can guess what was happenin'. I wan't so blamed sure of myself, to tell the truth, but I kept my face to the wind, and fought against it. Matie's face begun to grow green, an' the freckles loomed up in a way that was shockin' to see. Her hair was in strings down over her ears. She begun to cry, an' when she wiped her eyes, all that pretty smeary black I had admired so much come off on her handkerchief. But Bee was as pink an' sassy as a carnation, walkin' up an' down joshin' the captain an' tryin' to hold the wheel in the pilot-

house. I don't believe she ever looked so pretty before nor since as she did then, for her hair was curlin' into little tight locks all over her head, an' she took off her hat so we'd be sure to see it, too. Bee had captured her first rook, and begun to close in on her bishop's diagonal.

After awhile there come a fearful lurch, an' Matie caved in. I picked her up an' carried her into the cabin, she seemin' to prefer that smelly place to the air outside, an' I fixed her on a lounge, with a pillow.

"What's the matter, dear," I said, "are you seasick?"

I must have smiled, I s'pose, as I spoke, for she got pretty mad. "No!" she says, "I've got a headache, that's all."

"Perhaps you're a little faint an' hungry," I says. "Couldn't I bring you a ham sandwich or somethin'?"

"Will Golcher," she says, "if you *dare* mention anything to eat to me!"

"Why, Matie," I says, "I only thought you might be hungry."

"You didn't!" she flared out, "you was only makin' fun of me, you an' Bee, too."

"Oh, pshaw," I says, tryin' to get her out of her tantrum, "hadn't you better come out on deck an' get some fresh air?"

"You only want to go out so you can flirt with that Bee Willmarth," she says. "Go on out, if you want to; you don't have to stay here. I hate you! I'm sorry I ever said I'd marry you!"

By this time I'd begun to get mad myself, and I says, "Well, by ginger, you don't have to, if you don't want to!"

"You bet I don't!" she says, "an' I won't, neither, see if I do! You just tell the captain to turn round and go back to the city. I'm all through with *you*, Will Golcher!"

I went out to where Bee was standin' at the wheel in the pilot-house, with the captain showin' her how, an' I called her aside.

"I guess they ain't goin' to be no weddin' on this tug," I says. "Matie's mad, an' we better turn round an' go home."

She looked kind of funny at me. Then she says, "Oh, perhaps she'll change her mind. Let's keep on out to the three-mile limit, anyways. Matie won't mind, if she don't know which way we're steerin,' and they say seasickness is good for peo-

ple." Say, she begun to look at me pretty hard by that time. I expect I sort of felt it before I saw what was up. Her knights were gettin' pretty near the "objective plane."

We went up forward and sat in the bow, for I was beginnin' to feel fine. Bee just touched my hand once or twice. I thought it was accidental at first, so I investigated. She wan't the kind of girl that allows accidents to happen. Finally I had my arm round her waist and she was leanin' up to me. I didn't care how far out we went to sea. She had to take just one pawn to win.

Pretty soon the captain yelled out, "Pile out there, now; here we are, all right, three miles off shore! Hurry up! I have a date for this tug at the Lombard Street wharf at four, so step lively!"

"What'll we do?" I asked Bee.

"I dunno," she said, very slow, an' then, seein' I wasn't suggestin' anything, she said, "I'll go into the cabin an' see how Matie feels about it." So she went back.

I was in front of the pilot-house then. Well, sir, I don't know to this day what happened, whether she did go in to see Matie, or only pretended to, or what she said if she did go in. I never dared to

ask, an' anyway, I generally prefer to let these women-scraps alone an' dodge the hammers. But Bee come back an' she held out both of her hands to me, an' looked up at me, an' she says, as near as I can recollect,

"I don't believes she wants to marry you, William. Ain't she a fool?" Then she begun to cry.

Then I tumbled, an' it was checkmate for her. I caught her up in my arms, an' I says, kissin' her, "Shall you an' me do it then?" An' she says, "Of course, silly!"

I went back and called through the door, "I'm goin' to marry Bee, Matie. Have you got any objections?"

She says, "Go on an' marry her, if you want to, the sly old thing. I hate the both of you, an' the worst thing I hope for her is to have you for a husband!

So we done the act. The captain never said a word about my changin' girls at the last minute, but he grinned some. It was all the same to him so long as he got his twenty, I expect.

Well, sir, when I come to my senses, I realised that Bee had saved my life, an' I ain't one to criticise methods of feminine warfare with my pre-

server. But Bee was a chess-player, all right. Invitin' me to meet Matie Kenney was her openin' gambit, an' from then on she had me cinched, an' I never knew it. An' I thank God that I married a woman with brains an' beauty that's weather proof. Here comes Mrs. Golcher now; just in time!

II

THE CORONATION

¶ HOW *La Beale Norine disappeared from the castle and the Lady Isyl was crowned in her stead. How the queen sate in the great hall in dolor and was comforted by a mysterious stranger: The Tale of Love Terpsichorean.*

IN a large bare room of the Agricultural Pavilion at San Jose, two girls were sticking the last scraps of court-plaster to their faces, finishing a prinking that to a man would have seemed shameless. The elder and the taller and the blonder of the two was Norine Almeric, Queen-elect of the Fiesta, gowned in low-cut white satin and lace, girdled with a rainbow of artificial

gems, which branched and fell to her feet. As she skirmished round her enormous billowy train and reached for a long ermine cape, the other girl ran to assist her.

Miss Isyl Shea, her Maid of Honour, was a good foil for the Queen. She was not at all statuesque, but of an entrancingly domestic sort of blushing plumpness, dark olive of complexion and extravagantly feminine. She was costumed almost as elaborately as the Queen, but in scarlet appliqued with silver cloth.

"Isyl," said Miss Almeric, "you're a perfect picture! You should have been Queen. You're a thousand times prettier than I ever longed to be. I feel like Elizabeth persecuting Mary, Queen of Scots. Why didn't they elect you? I didn't want it. Heavens, I have had everything I wanted since I was old enough to make funny faces at Daddy; I've had my school-teachers discharged just because I didn't like the way they wore their hair. I only agreed to this on account of Daddy's friends, they made such a point of it."

"I didn't care either," the other answered, but something in the steadiness of her mouth belied her as she went on. "Papa had set his mind on it too,

and he was terribly disappointed. He refused to come to-night. The Golden Gate boys aren't coming either. They said the election was unfair."

"Most likely it was," Miss Almeric assented calmly. "Daddy's friends have a way of winning very often." She smiled rather sarcastically.

The Maid of Honour partly opened the door leading into the corridor and peeped out. Through this slit the buzz and rattle of the increasing audience in the hall came to them with the nearer noise of talk and laughter down the corridor, where the court, babbling, flirting and fooling, was assembling for the procession. A determined voice was uttering orders for the formation of the pageant.

Suddenly, from the other door of the waiting-room came a brisk rap and Isyl turned to see Miss Almeric answer it. A small messenger boy in uniform entered, and, gazing in fascinated admiration, handed her an envelope. Miss Almeric tore it open at once and glanced over it.

"Wait a minute, Isyl," she said, "I will be right back," and without further explanation she passed through the door and ran down stairs. The boy followed her.

Several minutes passed and Miss Almeric did not return. Then the sound of horses' hoofs was heard in the street below. Isyl ran to the window just in time to catch a glimpse of a hack swiftly turning the corner into the Alameda. Then came another knock—this time from the door which she had closed upon the corridor.

She opened, to find the Prime Minister appointed by the Queen. He was wearing, as unaffectedly as possible for a man who seldom soars to heights above a black diagonal "cutaway" and derby hat, a brilliant costume in which one might pick details from nearly every epoch since the Renaissance. He was primed with dignity and accomplished, for the first time officially, a wonderful obeisance, involving his whole body above the waist.

"The procession is ready to start, your Majesty!" he announced with his eyes on the floor. He raised them to find Isyl's merry smile the only other living thing in the room.

"Why, where's Miss Almeric?" he demanded, losing his gravity in the surprise and disappointment of wasted endeavour.

Isyl's smile fled, and she puckered her brow. "I

don't know," she said anxiously. "She just left the room a few moments ago, and she ought to be back. I am a little worried about it, to tell the truth."

She went to the door, opened it and looked down stairs. The Prime Minister, with a nervous hand upon his somewhat mischievous sword, descended. In another minute he reappeared with staring eyes.

"She ain't there," he cried. "She ain't anywheres! She's gone! Well, this *is* a fix! We can't have the Coronation without the Queen! What'll we do?"

Isyl giggled hysterically. "We might advertise for her," she suggested, her sense of humour triumphing over the anxiety.

"This thing is serious, by Jove!" the Prime Minister exclaimed. "There's a crowd outside that's paid money to see the Coronation, and somebody's got to be coronated. We can't wait a minute!" He stood for a moment in a Napoleonic attitude, and then sprang for the door.

"Call Kit Wilkinson!" he cried to a page outside. "Hurry up now," he added sharply.

Mr. Christopher Wilkinson came on the run, garbed in an indescribable outfit supposed to simu-

late the aspect of a Lord Chamberlain and Master of Ceremonies. An enormous brass chain, festooned from shoulder to shoulder, kept him from visibly bursting with importance, and a white rod of office, like a slim exclamation point, called attention to his grandeur. He was flurried with the burden of his duties and furious at the delay. It was the Chamberlain who had planned the whole Fiesta with a pomp of ritual and ceremony; this hitch in the proceedings exasperated him.

"For Heaven's sake, what's the matter?" he inquired: and then as his eye ran around the room, "Where's the Queen?"

The Prime Minister shrugged his shoulders; the Maid of Honour was uncertain whether to weep or laugh. "She is gone!" the girl answered.

"Gone!" he roared, and he looked at Isyl, as if he suspected her of having the missing Queen concealed about her person. Then his surprise dissolved in a melodramatic caution. He hastily closed the door and locked it.

"Now, what do you mean? Tell me what is all this foolishness! Hush, please, if there's anything wrong, we don't want the crowd to know it —least of all the newspaper people."

The tale was retold in whispers, while an impatient tumult grew louder outside. The Chamberlain was distraught with disappointment, and all three members of the court stared at each other in consternation. A State secret, big with portent, confronted them; it must be met and solved without delay. A rapping at the door intensified their suspense. But the Chamberlain rose to the occasion.

"Miss Shea," he announced, "you must be crowned Queen of the Fiesta. We have no time to look for Miss Almeric. I can't imagine what has happened, but we'll say that she was suddenly taken ill and has gone home. I won't have this show ruined now, after all I've done for it. But remember," he added, "nothing is to be told of Miss Almeric's disappearance, until we have had time to investigate. You must promise on your honour!"

They nodded, quite serious now, and the Prime Minister, giving his arm to Isyl, led her into the corridor, where the procession was waiting in high disapproval of the delay. Behind the courtiers a bevy of reporters, already scenting trouble, was watching sharply. The word was passed down

the line that as Miss Almeric was ill, Miss Shea was to be made Queen, and a murmur of discontent did not make Isyl's position any easier to face. She took her place, however, under a bobbing canopy, and the word was given to move.

Preceded by a small herald, wearing a blue baldric and holding to her lips a paste board trumpet, the procession debouched into the hall of the Pavilion, and marched up the central aisle, The "Drag" was out in force, full of expectation. triumphant as usual, whether at election, trial, or junket. The great concourse of spectators was as if one great family had gathered under the patriarchal guidance of Bob Almeric, the uncrowned King of the County. To-night his abstract majesty was to be made visibly manifest in the coronation of his twenty-year-old daughter; and his Aldermen, his Judges, his Police Officers and his Heads of Departments were ready to do her homage.

But, as they watched, lo, here walked the defeated candidate, Isyl Shea, escorted in triumph by a retinue of the boss's own choosing! It was incredible; and a murmur of many protesting voices rose to the ceiling. No one could deny that Isyl was the prettier of the two girls, and the more

fitting to be crowned a Queen of Beauty. She walked, bashful and hesitating as a bride, looking neither this way nor that, toward the throne; but there were no cheers for her when she ascended the dais.

The mystery was explained by an announcement from the Chamberlain, and Bob Almeric, tearing himself away from a nest of sympathetic friends, arose and hurried from the hall. The ritual proceeded.

The Prime Minister delivered half-heartedly his Coronation speech. Isyl advanced with dignity, and bending her head, received the crown and assumed the throne, a high-backed piece of furniture seldom seen outside of photographic studios. The Mayor of San Jose arose, and in a few magnificent words highly eulogistic of "this our Garden Spot of the World," presented the Queen with the keys of the City in a burned leather casket.

The band now struck up "God Save the Queen," and amidst a great clattering of chairs removed by a frantic Floor Committee, the processional promenade was formed to pass the throne.

So these subjects of her Carnival kingdom

passed her in review, led by the ubiquitous Board of Trade. Some couples stopped and bowed with exaggerated formality; some showed awkward, sheepish embarrassment, some scarcely paused in their conversation, but nodded their heads cavalierly. It was over at last, and the Chamberlain announced the first dance.

The ball should have been opened by the Queen, Isyl knew, but no one came to escort her to the floor. Her Ladies in Waiting, seated below her, were carried off one by one, and she was left alone upon her conspicuous perch, like a statue on the cupola of a gilded dome. It was evident now that she was to be ignored, she who was the false Queen, although she had been crowned with due solemnity. The "Drag," unable to honour their own favourite, was to dishonour her. The humiliation of the public affront burned a crimson stain upon her cheek.

The throne where Isyl now found herself sequestered as if in some quaint dream was upon a high platform built at one end of the great hall. All about were hung the Fiesta colours, purple and gold, with flags of all nations and streamers pendant from every angle of the roof trusses. On the floor,

the whirling dancers wove varying patterns, as the uniforms of the different secret fraternities mingled with the brightly coloured gowns of the ladies. The swell and rhythmic cadence of the orchestra came up to her with a hum of conversation. The music, the murmur and the twinkle of many electric lights fascinated her, and she sat as if hypnotised.

"Oh, Isyl!"

There was a voice behind her. She looked and saw only a wall of parti-coloured bunting gently waving in full festoons. She seemed to be alone on the great platform, cut off from the surging, swaying crowd below. Again she heard the voice, and a clergyman officiating at a funeral and suddenly interrupted by a jest from the corpse, could have been no more surprised than was the Queen.

"Is an uncouth stranger permitted to address the Goddess of Liberty basking in the limelight?"

"Who in the world are you?" she said, "and where in the world are you?"

"I am not a Nihilist with a dynamite bomb ready to blow up your throne; that's who I am! And I am standing on a keg of nails in the doorway of the Committee Room about eighteen inches behind your royal left elbow. If you'll kindly stretch back

your lily-white hand, I will greet your Majesty as royalty was ever greeted in the iron-bodied yore-time."

Seated in the full gaze of thousands on the floor below, Isyl dared not laugh aloud, much as she wished to. She held her fan in front of her lips, and asked,

"How in the world did you get there?"

"Not being able to force my fiery war-horse up the stairs, I came on foot," replied the affable mystery. "Now, where is that right hand, please?—duty before pleasure!"

She was just reckless enough by this time to assent. The invisible stranger, reaching through an opening in the bunting, pressed his lips to her outstretched hand. Then, to her surprise, he slipped a ring upon the fourth finger.

"Oh!" cried the Queen, "what's this for? Why, I can't take it, really."

"Please keep it till called for; owner will pay charges," said the stranger. "It's wished on, remember."

Isyl turned it on her finger in wonder. There was something familiar about the sapphire, yet she could not remember just where she had seen one like it.

She was, after all, having a better time than she had expected.

"What did you come here for?" she asked.

"The fury of a restless desire, adulterated with a four-per-cent. solution of nothing-else-to-do," he answered.

"Did you see me in the hall?" she asked.

"I did," he replied, "and you were a star of the first magnitude. But I had an instinctive premonition, that it might be chilly at your lofty altitude, removed from the common herd of cheap Swedes. I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind a few merry how-de-do's, not to be discovered in Hoyle, his Book. Hence these jollies. Say, does that go?" he added anxiously.

"Did you escape from the Agnews Asylum?" Isyl asked, amazed at these figures of speech. "You seem to be a rather talkative young lunatic!"

"Oh, if you are otherwise engaged in profound contemplation, or ruminating on the Theory of Indeterminate Asymptotes, why then I can fade away. But say, you don't mind a royal intrigue on the Q.T., do you?"

"Idiot," said the Queen, "what do you want?"

"See here, little girl, seriously, you're not having a very good time up there, are you?"

"No," said Isyl, looking at the sapphire, "I'm not."

"It was a low Dutch trick to cut you out like this," he went on emphatically. "I wouldn't stand for it."

"What can I do?" she asked. "I can't take my dolls and go home. Really, it's awfully good of you to come up here and sympathise. Of course, though, I must admit that it's an inexcusable impertinence. I don't even know you."

"Then it is the proper time to get acquainted," said the unseen.

"Well, you might stay a little while and amuse me, if you have nothing else to do," she suggested.

"All right," he assented. "Of course, I can't do many parlour tricks or palmistry stunts, standing on a barrel behind the arras, but if there is any witchery in the human baritone to charm an ostracised princess, just let me know and I'm your nightingale. Shall I warble a few low notes? I'm just out of conundrums."

"Oh, just talk and amuse me," said Isyl.

"Say, I know! That two-step they're spieling reminds me of a funny thing I ran across once. It's a true story. Shall I sing you a song of the long ago?"

"If you can tell it in the English language, do."

said Isyl, and she prepared to listen, looking pensively over the assembly.

"Wait till I change my feet," was the reply, and he proceeded with

The Story of the Mysterious Stranger

TWO-STEP WILLIE

or, Love Terpsichorean

THE newsiest elopement in San Francisco never happened. So the only reason I know anything about it is because I patronise the Tonsorial Parlours of William J. Riddle, B.S.; which initials stand for the degree of Bachelor of Shaving as conferred by the Barbers' College on Third Street.

A barber has to talk; perhaps because the comic weeklies have committed him to the custom, and perhaps because his trade is as near being a feminine accomplishment as a man of spirit will undertake. Anyway, W. J. Riddle is no exception to the rule, and this is the cause of his occasionally varying his ordinary nickname of Two-Step Willie with that of Gabby Bill. The brief but joyous history of his fatal plunge into the society of San Fran-

cisco's "400" will explain both aliases. W. J. is rather proud of the tale now, and he told it to me with all the relish that a maiden aunt has in narrating the story of her trip to Paris and Monte Carlo. This is the yarn, O Queen!

About ten years ago, the Real Thing in San Francisco's swell drag was Pierpoint Browning, and unless every festive function had his name blown in the bottle it didn't write up for more than two or three lines in the social columns of the "Wave." He was only a marine underwriter's clerk before he graduated into steering the *haut ton* and leading cotillions, and all this happened at about the time he was in the transition state.

"Browny," as they used to call him, when they wanted his help, was all things to all women. He was a good "tame cat" when you needed a seat filled in your theatre box, he could everlastingly decorate a dinner table and tell you how to drape fish-nets, he could invent freak cotillion stunts to beat the trolley, and he knew down to four places of decimals just who was who in a town where most millionaire's ancestors, half a generation back, are washwomen or terriers. The buds said he was "just lovely," the married women said he was "so

interesting," and he was solid with the dowagers. He had a free annual pass everywhere worth going. He was a "universal favourite" and ever "the life of the party." What was more to the point with the swells was that Browny was of a good rich, ripe, juicy Southern family himself, if he was an underwriter's clerk, and he had grandfathers to throw at the birds.

The consequence was, he soon became a kind of social dictator and blue-book expert. He could make out a list of invitations for a reception that required no asterisks or foot-notes to explain why. A debutante didn't dare to come out till her old man had squared "Browny" and got his sanction; or if she did, she soon found herself with the wall-flowers. Nobody ever quite knew how he managed to wire the town so well, but if you cut "Browny" you cut a live wire and were socially paralysed. Everybody that came within ten blocks of good society, from chaperones to caterers, tried to get a line on him.

Of course Browny had his pick of the town, and he marked a bud named Flora Donovan for the future Mrs. Browning, and proceeded to nail her down. He was in a position, by this time, to give

any favourite of his a pretty good time, without it costing him a bean, and so Flora came in for the cream of everything doing. If she wanted to go to Del Monte that Summer, Browny made Del Monte the only possible resort for any one in the swim. If she preferred Castle Crags, the tavern underneath Mt. Shasta became the Mecca of the swells. If Flora gave a tea, she got no "regrets"—everybody came—they had to. Flora could get into drawing-rooms where her mother wouldn't try to push past the door. If there was a distinguished stranger or literary guy hit the town, Flora had him and Browny up to dinner, and sent her father to bed.

Now Flora Donovan wasn't what you might call of the elect or to the manner born, but was strictly Browning-made. That is to say, her father was a day-labourer in Virginia City before he struck pay dirt and swelled up into seven figures. Her mother used to cook for thirty terriers at the Black Betty Mine. But anything like that goes all right in San Francisco, if it has money and the social backing of Pierpoint Browning.

Flora, then, as you may imagine, was a bit short on the Intellectual Life. She was all sorts of a

good fellow, though, with a will and a way of her own and plenty of red blood corpuscles. But she wouldn't have known Differential Calculus if she had eaten it fried *à la* Maryland. She was big and pretty, and everybody liked her and no catch questions asked. Everybody thought that she and Browny were as good as engaged, when, bing! they had a little spat, which, at last, introduces Two-Step Willie.

Browny was in the habit of patronising a little three-chair barber shop near his office on Montgomery Street, and he had broken my friend Riddle to cut the Browning hair and trim the Browning beard exactly as Browning wanted it done, and no foolishness about sea-foam shampoos or dandruff cure. Riddle talked ever as he worked, in the way that barbers will.

One day when Willie Riddle was stropping his razor, he said, "Say, Mr. Browning, I understand you get up a good many parties around town. Is that right?"

Pierpoint Browning spluttered out an "Oh, yes," and Riddle went on, insinuatingly, showing what a good fellow he could be,

"Say, you know I'm more or less of a dancing

man myself, and I wouldn't mind if you got me an invite to some of them flare-outs."

Browny chuckled. He had heard something of Riddle's history, for the barber was then renowned, South of Market Street, as "Two-Step Willie," that being his favourite dance, wherein he excelled, fabulously. He was the President of the Chrysanthemum Social and Outing Club, too, besides having won first prize "for the best-dressed gent" at the Christmas Masquerade Ball of the "Vultures." All of which, being translated, means that Two-Step Willie was, in his own set, quite as great a man as Browny was in his, although, as you know, there's very little reciprocity between the North and the South of Market Street. Being able, moreover, to dance a two-step to perfection, and having charmed one-half of the city with his nimble, twinkling heels, Willie was longing for more worlds to conquer. He needed only a little coaching to be a regular dancing-master or cotillion leader.

Now, Willie Riddle's request just happened to remind Browny of a remark of Flora's that rankled. "You can't dance the two-step for raw potatoes, that's why you won't have them on your dance-programmes," was the characteristic way

she had put it, for Browny was particularly down on the new jump, and wouldn't stand for it. The jest lay rather in the manner than the matter of it, but it had made Browny pretty sore.

A horrid thought entered Pierpoint Browning's head. It took unto itself roots and grew. It was weird, for a person of Pierpoint Browning's staid powers of imagination, and it bewitched him. If Flora Donovan wanted some one whose chief requisite was an ability to trip the light fantastic two-step, why not introduce William J. Riddle, the Pride of Minna Street? It would be a good joke on Flora. As for the murder of Riddle's subsequent career, that would be easily managed. It would be simply a one-night stand, and then back to the mug and strop again.

"H'm," Browny said, after he had thought all this out, "I don't know but I might manage to get you an invitation sometime. I'll see." And he did.

It took him about two weeks to get Two-Step Willie into training for the Friday Night Cotillion, and Browny had him round to his room coaching him on all points and sundry. He reorganised Willie's Minna Street Theory of Dress, and trimmed down some of his Tar Flat ideals of free and

easy deportment. By tightening up a screw here, loosening a nut there, and oiling him up all over, he succeeded in making Willie socially presentable. The talky-talk part was easy. A barber meets a good many different sorts of people, and this one had a rather smart and fetching line of gab that would fool any ordinary onlooker.

So, one Friday night, Browny trotted out his new entry, as Mr. Will Riddle, and introduced him to Flora and the rest of the debutantes, mentioning something hazy about his being related to The Riddles of Philadelphia. Willie did actually happen to have a second-cousin there. You know, of course, that, in Philadelphia there are Riddles and Riddles. This one was a plumber.

Mr. Riddle of San Francisco then sailed in, with his customary expectation of easy victory, jauntily jollied Miss Donovan and her 300-pound mamma, and then entered for a two-step which Browny had taken good care to put in on the list of dances. Willie was not disappointed. He scored a gold bull's-eye. Then he made good all along the line, for when it came to sitting out for a corner-chat, or a heart-to-heart flirtation in the supper-room, he was perfectly able to deliver the goods.

Perhaps all clever and successful men make love in the same way; and no doubt what went with the salesladies of Minna Street was only a part of the General Girl Proposition. He made a hit with Flora, at any rate. In fact, he did it a good deal too well and too soon to suit Pierpoint Browning; and no doubt Flora enjoyed playing off the handsome stranger against her would-be, on account of the spat which hadn't quite healed over. She certainly was good to Willie.

Meanwhile, Riddle had put in some fine work with Flora's mother. Most people had an idea that the mention of life in Virginia City in the early sixties would be considered indelicate and in bad taste by the Donovans, since their rise to social eminence, but Willie was innocent, and butted right in with a remark about his having lived in Virginia City himself, about that time, and the old lady took him into her heart straightway. The fact was, she loved to talk about old times, but Flora wouldn't let her. So it was that Willie left the cotillion with an invitation to dine at the Donovan's next day. He didn't tell Browny.

That next day, the gods called Pierpoint Browning out of town; he went to El Paso on hurry busi-

ness, and from there to Mexico, and it was two weeks before he got back. He had forgotten all about Two-Step Willie, though he had thought some about Flora. It never entered his head that Willie could have been climbing the social ladder, hand over hand, meanwhile. When Browny went up to call on the Donovans, he nearly fainted away.

Willie had been industriously sawing wood, and by this time he was an old friend of the family. Old Mr. Donovan was calling him Bill, the old lady had half talked him to death, Flora had introduced him to nearly everybody in town, and the bull pup had stopped growling at him.

How Willie had kept up his end the Lord only knows. From what he let drop I imagine that he had spent about every cent he had saved to buy an interest in a shop with, and I have no doubt he counted the money well lost. He had splurged in flowers and cabs and suppers and theatre tickets in a way that did him credit as a rapid-fire spender. He had done it up brown, travelling every night after 7.30 as W. Jimpson Riddle, a relative of The Riddles of Philadelphia, and yelling "next!" every day at his chair in the Montgomery Street shop. Talk about Monsieur Beaucaire! He led a double

life, all right. It was lucky for him that none of the men in Flora's set happened to patronise that Tonsorial Establishment. Mrs. Donovan admired his white, soft hands, and thought his finger-nails were very distinguished-looking.

Browny sat and stared while his protégé patronised him in a way that would have made a hen laugh. I don't suppose it had ever entered Willie's head that he wasn't the social equal of any one who couldn't two-step. He really believed that this was a free country, and all men equal.

What the devil was Browny to do? If he showed up Two-Step Willie he would have to confess to having planned a pretty mean game himself, but he couldn't bear to let the thing go on any farther. It certainly wasn't right to Flora. It was a hard nut to crack. He couldn't ask Willie to step down and out, at this late hour. His one hope was that the barber wouldn't be able to stand the pace and would sink back into a Minna Street oblivion from lack of funds. But just about as soon as he decided this, Willie showed his hand. He was helplessly in love, and was actually trying to marry Flora Donovan. He told Browny about it himself!

How Flora could stand for him, Browny couldn't

see, but she advertised the fact liberally. She had him everywhere, and Browny didn't even have a chance for a look-in. If he called in the daytime, Flora was out. If he called in the evening, or met her at a blow-out, little old Two-Step Willie would be surely moored alongside. Browny never could get her alone, even if he'd dared to tell the horrid truth, which was becoming harder every day.

So matters went along for a week, and Browny lay awake nights over it. He'd begun to want the girl pretty bad himself, by this time, only he didn't dare to confess. Two-Step Willie had now got his second wind and was a game stayer.

Finally Browny took his life in his hands and sent word to Flora that he must see her that afternoon. She said she'd be in. Browny, I think, was going to settle the puzzle by proposing to her himself, and calling for a show-down.

He was taken into a little reception-room off the hall, and while he was waiting, he heard Flora come from the dining-room where the maid didn't seem to have looked for her. She went to the telephone and began to talk. When Browny heard her say, "Hello, Willie," he listened like a school-girl. And he certainly heard things.

Yes, he heard enough to make him perspire freely. From what he caught, he grew pretty certain that Flora and Willie were engaged, and that they were planning to elope that very evening and take the Owl train to Los Angeles. That settled it for him. But of course he didn't know that Flora hadn't taken the telephone off the hook at all, and was really talking to the hat-rack.

Flora came into the reception-room with her hat on, and seemed to be very much surprised to find Browny waiting for her there. He didn't lose any time, but went to it like a man.

"I have come to say what I ought to have told you long ago, Flora, only I didn't dare to. I introduced you to Mr. Riddle, and I wilfully deceived you about him. I deserve to be horsewhipped. But you mustn't have anything more to do with him, Flora."

"Why?" asked Flora. "I think he is awfully interesting."

"He's not what you think he is," Browny stammered; "the fact is, he's a barber!"

Flora laughed.

"Well, Mr. Browning, you've decided to tell me at last, have you?"

It was now Browny's turn to be bewildered.

"Do you mean to say you knew it before?" he asked.

"I've known it for some time," she answered, smiling at him in a highly pleased way, "and I was only waiting to see whether or not you'd be honourable enough to confess your rather poor joke on me. I'm glad you have, at last, though it's pretty late in the day!"

Well, Browny married her that winter, so I expect they made it up all right. And I believe that Two-Step Willie is still a friend, and calls regularly —always after 7.30 p.m., though. The funny part of the whole thing, or the pathetic part, if you like, was that Willie told Flora his business, in all innocence, the night he was first introduced.

III

THE GRAND COMMANDER

¶ HOW *Queen Isyl was rescued of her plight by her knights, and was wooed by the Grand Commander: The Tale of Love Juvenile.*

DURING the last sentences of the mysterious stranger's narrative, Queen Isyl's eyes, gazing somewhat abstractedly over the crowd of dancers on the floor below, had noticed a slight commotion at the farther end of the Pavilion. This excitement spread rapidly, until one by one the couples left the centre of the hall, and stood watching the main entrance. The band stopped, and in the sudden silence there came a hullabaloo from outside; a fusillade of pistol shots was heard, followed by loud cheering. Through this clamour, Isyl caught her own name yelled by staccato voices, as the new arrivals came jubilantly nearer. She turned toward the hiding-place of the stranger, and spoke hurriedly behind her fan.

"You must go now, quick! Do you hear all that racket? It must be the Knights of the Golden

Gate—my friends, and I must be ready to receive them. It will be all right now. You have been awfully good to me, but you mustn't be found here."

"Well," said the stranger, "I'll vanish if I must be geshaken, but I'll return to claim my blooming bride anon, at the psychological moment. Is there anything I can do for you, my Queen?"

Isyl's thoughts ran quickly to Norine's flight. "Yes," she said, "you can! Go to Miss Almeric's house, see her or her father if you can, and find out what is the matter. Something has happened and I must know what it is. Can you do that for me?"

"He can do little who can't do this," was the reply. "I'm as good a little Pinkerton as you ever sent anywhere."

She tossed her lace handkerchief behind her. "Here, take this, so that I'll know you when you come back," she whispered.

She glanced behind her, and saw a hand capture the favour; then she heard the stranger jumping to the floor. A door slammed. At that moment the hilarious Commandery of the Knights of the Golden Gate burst into the hall, a whirlwind of thirty impetuous youths uniformed in white canvas

vaquero costumes. They proceeded noisily toward the throne, crying "Long live Queen Isyl."

After this tribute they started to enliven the assembly, but the Grand Commander, mindful of his official position, bowed low before the dais, swinging a huge white sombrero from his head. He was what some women would call a handsome man.

"Well, Miss Isyl—I beg pardon, your Majesty," he said, "you are looking charming this evening. You need no sceptre to show your power. You must remember," he added playfully, "that I prophesied this!"

In private life, the Grand Commander was a Latin teacher in the Santa Clara High School. His pedantry was familiar to Isyl, but something in the cock-sureness of his congratulation aroused her suspicion.

"I'm sorry it had to come this way!" she said, "and I'm awfully worried over Miss Almeric. Have you heard anything about her?"

"No," said the Grand Commander, "and I don't know that I care to. I believe that you were legally elected, and you should be quite at your ease upon the throne. The pernicious methods of

the 'Drag' you know as well as I—but we fooled them this time."

Isyl caught at this last phrase with another doubt of his meaning. "Fooled them? What do you mean?"

"Nothing at all, I assure you, only you are the reigning monarch after all." Here he smiled, showing a line of teeth, so white and regular, as to make one suspect their genuineness. He put his hand to his waistcoat theatrically. "But you have always reigned in my heart! Will your gracious Majesty deign to favour me with a dance?"

"Not in this long train," Isyl said, "but I'd be glad if you would take me to the supper-room; I feel rather faint and my head aches."

"Ah, yes, 'uneasy lies the head that wears a crown,' as Shakespeare says," he responded, and gave her his arm. They descended to the floor. Now that the tide had turned in her favour, there was more fire in her eyes, and she played her part with spirit. Her progress became an ovation. The Knights of the Golden Gate, a bit afraid of her while she was a statue, crowded about her with immoderate congratulations. The chaperones, who had kept basilisk eyes upon her, askance, petted

her with hypocritical compliments, and she was besieged with reporters. The official news of Norine's disappearance had been given to them by the Chamberlain and the Prime Minister, and these two officers had said all that was to be said, so the reigning Queen had chiefly to promise her photographs and make perfunctory conversation. Her Maids of Honour, with the rest of the following of the "Drag," were cool and drily polite.

Desirous of one of those tête-à-têtes for which he was notorious, the Grand Commander rescued her from all this adulation, and, with experienced manœuvres, secured for her a secluded corner of the supper-room. Here he ensconced her and prepared for a determined love-making.

At first, Isyl made no effort to follow his silly and stilted conversation. She had too much to think about to be much interested in the schoolmaster who had bored her with his attentions for the last two years. The sapphire ring on her finger was alone enough to keep a maiden's mind busy with conjectures. But at last she became aware that her companion was becoming even more fulsome than usual in his compliments, more languishing in his gaze.

She made no pretence of attention, but let her mind wander to the mysterious stranger, who should, she thought, have returned before this. Who was he? What did he mean by the ring? And, neither least nor last in her imaginings, she wondered if he were handsome—as good-looking, say, as the Grand Commander, still mouthing his interminable blandishments.

Then, at a doorway on the other side of the room, a young man suddenly appeared, dangling a lace handkerchief in his hand. He was tall, and wore evening dress. A maid would have to be considerably in love with him to persuade herself that he was handsome, for a tumbled shock of copper-coloured hair surmounted a freckled face with a square jaw. Isyl, catching this first glimpse of him, felt her heart sink with disappointment. Was this the romantic, picturesque cavalier she had been awaiting with so much eagerness? And then he smiled.

A man could do anything with a smile like that, and a woman nothing against it. It was the antidote always ready for his impertinence. It was a smile that blew down resentment as a wind blows down a fence, and it took Isyl off her feet at once. The stranger was ugly, there was no doubt of that, but the

character in his face made the Grand Commander look like a pretty doll. Between the two of them there was instant conflict.

"There is a gentleman over there trying to catch your eye," remarked the Grand Commander. "To my mind, he resembles nothing more than a gargoyle, if you catch my meaning. You of course are aware that in the Gothic period of architecture——"

"That man is a very good friend of mine," Isyl interrupted, stiffly and curtly.

"Oh, I beg pardon, I'm sure," said the Grand Commander.

The mysterious stranger approached the pair with nonchalance.

"Your Majesty," he began, "I believe you promised me a few moments this evening. Could I have the pleasure of some bunches of well-chosen words with thee?"

"The Queen is otherwise engaged, as you can easily see," said the Grand Commander, infuriated at this interruption.

The mysterious stranger bowed with mock politeness. "I'll have to disappoint you by refusing to give the countercheck-quarrelsome in the presence of the Queen of Love and Beauty," he said, suavely.

Isyl, who, after the Grand Commander's exhibition of tact, would have accepted the company of a chimpanzee, in preference, turned to him with the smile that women give at such times. "You'll really have to excuse me," she said, "I did promise him a few minutes."

The discomfited wooer left sullenly.

"Now what have you found out?" the Queen asked.

"Nothing," was the disappointing reply. "The equation has two unknown quantities, and I never had more than a handshake with Quadratics. But here's the recipe: let X represent the missing lady, and Y her blindly doting father. Let A be the Pavilion, and B the Almerics' happy home. To prove: that A minus X equals B plus X plus Y. If you're up on the Binomial Theorem, here's a lead pencil and an old envelope to figure on."

"Could you please talk sense for one minute?" Isyl pleaded.

"Easy," was the reply. "Here it is, in words of one syllable. Old man Almeric wouldn't talk till I had inserted one of my patent-leather 7's in the crack of the door, and refused to let him shut it. He then gave me one of the most cordial invitations to stay

out that I have ever experienced in a short but somewhat zig-zag career. When I insisted, in my artless Japanese way, that I had to have the news, he swore with one hand on his heart that his daughter was up-stairs with a raging headache, and with the other he reached for a large, determined-looking stick. I departed, without leaving my card."

"Then Norine is at home, after all?" said the Queen.

"She is, or she isn't—that's a skinch. But in my book it's a thousand to one shot that she isn't. The old man followed me back, and I saw him arguing with the high Muck-a-muck, here. The one that thinks he's a Chamberlain or Lord High Executioner or something."

"Why, I've heard nothing about it!" Isyl exclaimed.

"Of course not. I figure it out this way. Dolly's lost, and the old man thinks maybe she's up to larks, and he's afraid of the scandal, if the papers get hold of it. The fierce white light that beats about a throne, as Kipling says, is apt to say unpleasant things at a time like this, and until he knows just what's up, old Almeric is playing against time and holding his jaw. He doesn't know where

she is any more than we do, and we'll have to look in another pocket, if we want to find your late lamented rival. I have spoken."

"But we must find her!" Isyl cried. "I can't bear it, this stealing all her fun! She's the Queen by rights, and if no one else can find her, I will!"

"With little Tommy, of course?" he inquired "Meaning me."

"Oh, if you would help me! We can go to-morrow morning, for the parade doesn't start till two. If we can only find a clew!"

"I'll call for you at eight," said the red-headed youth, "and I'll bring a microscope and a fine-toothed comb. We'll go through the town, and let no guilty man escape!"

Isyl started to give him back the ring.

"No, keep it," he said. "We'll talk about that, to-morrow. I'll have to resign in favour of our friend, little Cosy-corner Willie, the Human Pork Chop, for I must hence. I haven't arranged the hour for the sun to rise to-morrow, and I mustn't disappoint so many trusting people. Farewell, O Queen!"

He left, Isyl following him with her eyes and a

smile. But her expression faded, as the Grand Commander, seeing her alone, reappeared.

He did indeed look like a pork chop, with his brown, well-done beard, and his pink, rare cheeks, and the metaphor cheered Isyl almost to another smile. The Grand Commander kindled under its kindly, tolerant influence.

"Miss Almeric," he said, "was the Queen of Diamonds, but you, Miss Isyl, are the Queen of Hearts!"

"Tell me, Queen of Hearts," he went on, seeing the smile deepen and reaching unsuccessfully for her hand, "if a man of not too displeasing an exterior, of a cultivated and refined mind, a faithful character and assured position in the community, should ask you to become your King of Hearts—let me state a hypothetical case—what would you say?"

Now the number of similar cautious proposals he had made to the girls of San Jose, was a part of the history of the city, and Isyl had small compunction in taking him lightly.

"I suppose I'd say," she said, watching the door, "that you'd make a better Knave. Is this the only trick you ever tried to take?"

"Ah, the only one I ever really cared to win," he answered soulfully, "except perhaps one other. That was a sincere, but foolish fancy, and I was cruelly, basely deceived. If I may carry out the metaphor, the King was playing against marked cards."

"Yes," said Isyl absently, "so you have been in love before, have you?"

"I feel, I know," he replied, "that I can be sure of your sympathy if I confide to you the history of the most lacerating episode of my life."

And without waiting for further encouragement he began

The Story of the Grand Commander

THE TEACHER'S PET

Or, Love Juvenile

I HAVE usually made it a point, in my teaching, never to form social relations with my pupils. It sadly interferes with discipline; it makes talk. A schoolmaster has to be circumspect, and many of the little joys of life are denied him. But a man has to make a certain number of mistakes before he learns the truth of this, and my own experience was, I must confess, embar-

rassing, if not painful. It occurred while I was a teacher of Latin in the Petaluma High School.

Amongst my pupils in the senior class was a girl of seventeen named Rowena Philbrick. She was an innocent, fresh looking young thing, with big blue eyes and white teeth and a merry smile that always seemed perfectly ingenuous. Whenever I caught her covertly looking at me, I am sure I blushed, for really, she was quite a distracting person. I was younger then, and more susceptible. I may say I lacked discrimination, not to speak of knowledge of human nature, and, in especial, women. Though, indeed, as Pope says,

"Woman's at best a contradiction still!"

I was, as I said, young and impressionable. I was not, I might add, as discreet as an instructor should be. Rowena's beauty attracted me and I began soon to be interested in her. It seems absurd, now, that I should have allowed myself to be cajoled by such a mere chit with pink cheeks, but at the time I was sure that I was seriously smitten. Of course, you must understand the attachment was gradual. I am not naturally impetuous or reckless, and I was exceedingly care-

ful to do nothing whatever to arouse gossip. I was very guarded, too, in my first offers of friendship, to be sure that such feelings would be reciprocated. I sounded her and found that I was not, upon the whole, unattractive to her.

I began by keeping her after school occasionally, ostensibly for the purpose of giving advice in her Latin syntax, upon which point she was lamentably weak, and also to stimulate her desire for higher scholarship, for she was of but mediocre intellectual endowments, I am afraid. These little talks were so pleasant that we soon became quite jolly friends, and I could see that the privilege of enjoying my society was appreciated by this little country girl, as a new and fascinating interest in her life.

Occasionally, too, I permitted myself to walk home with Rowena, amusing her with some of those delightful jests from "Coleridge's Table Talk," or "Eighteenth Century Wit and Humour." She was always responsive, often slightly too much so, laughing immoderately at things that, to me, seemed, at best, but mildly amusing. Poor little thing! I suppose the opportunity for truly intellectual comradeship with a highly cultivated man slightly bewildered her with excitement.

On Sunday afternoons, I made it my habit to call upon Rowena, and we spent many a happy hour upon her piazza together, while her mother slept in an East Indian—or is it a Ceylon?—rattan chair. I would read selections from Dryden's fascinating satires, or, for lighter and more relaxing enjoyment, "The Lady of the Lake." Rowena would lie in her hammock, a perfect picture of youthful charm, reminding me often of Shelley's lines:

"*A lovely lady, garmented in light*
From her own beauty."

Her mind, though unformed, was eager and impressionable, and my own commentaries upon obscure passages or obsolescent references enlivened an association which was, on my part, becoming daily more serious and heartfelt. She was often reticent and dreamy at these meetings, and frequently her young mind wandered in maiden meditation fancy-free, as the Bard of Avon says. Her mother always awoke as soon as our talk became more frivolous, for I did not care to make the conversation unvaryingly scholastic. Her glee when I permitted myself to indulge in persiflage or puns, at such times, was a pleasant stimulus to my

wit, for some of my stories were, if I say it myself, subtle and amusing, without ever condescending to the coarse humour that the common country youth indulged in. Indeed, she would often go so far in her relish of such fancies as to request me to repeat some favourite anecdote to her father or elderly relative.

But the pathetic lack of true scholarship annoyed me excessively. In my foolish fondness for the young Rowena, I fancied that I might kindle her pride in her work by occasionally marking her recitations slightly higher than a strict estimate would find them worth. She seemed to be delighted by these gratuitous credits, and her parents expressed themselves as being pleased to find her doing so well in the class. Sometimes, too, I would give her hints as to the composition of an English theme to be handed in, hastily sketching the subject and pointing out cross-references easily attainable, and then she would look at me with her blue, innocent eyes in a way that made me, I admit it frankly, wish to embrace her. But I restrained myself, and never gave anyone the slightest chance to question my behaviour. My friendship with Rowena was, to the last, Platonic.

At times she asked me in regard to the questions I intended propounding on the morrow, and, thinking that in this way she might be induced to give more attention to her studies than she had done, I would give her guarded hints as to my "quizzes" and invariably found that she had been greatly helped in her work thereby. Encouraged by this sign of interest, and anxious to form her mind more broadly, in the pure interests of her intellectual life, I made a practice of ascertaining, in a roundabout way, the questions to be asked by other instructors in the Chemistry and Mathematics examinations, and communicated to Rowena their general tenor. I was glad to see that, owing perhaps to this encouragement, she began to take a sincere interest in her class standing. Despite the fact that, by this time, she began to be called, in juvenile derision, "the teacher's pet," owing to a misapprehension of my motives, she was recognised as one of the leaders of the senior class.

But there was one "little rift within the lute"—it is Tennyson, I believe, who so expresses it—that began to threaten trouble. There was in the class a young scapegrace named Oliver Burne, who was a menace to the discipline of the school, and

thoroughly unscrupulous and dishonest. During one of the first weeks of term I caught him throwing water in the school yard, although such rude acts were expressly forbidden by a rule of the School principal! On another occasion, three spheres, kept for the use of the drawing-classes, disappeared mysteriously, and, although I could not prove his guilt, I was morally certain that the Burne boy had stolen them. I mention these ungentlemanly violations of discipline only to show how unprincipled he was, for there was never the slightest personal animus on my part. Most of his infractions were so cleverly achieved that absolute detection was impossible. He was a rosy, apple-cheeked lad, small for his age, and no one, to look at him, would believe so innocent-appearing a boy, could be, at heart, so malicious and depraved.

Singularly enough, as I thought at the time, Oliver Burne's scholarship was above reproach. The correctness of his examination papers surprised me. They were often as superior as Rowena's. In simple justice, I could not fail to mark him "passed," and even "passed with credit," for justice has always been the keynote of my teaching. I could, however, call the attention of the principal to his

uniform bad conduct, although it was seldom that I could point out any one overt act that was against the rules, and had to be guided rather by what I knew of the boy's evil character than by visible proof of his misconduct. In retaliation, he inaugurated a series of petty annoyances that tortured my nerves. I did my best to induce the principal to expel the lad, but influence was brought to bear which made that impossible. The politics and corruption in the country schools is sometimes past belief.

The horrid term "teacher's pet" which was applied to Rowena had its compensations. It set us two off against the world and cemented a growing friendship. I could wait, for she was yet quite young, and, at any rate, I did not care to become engaged to her until the Summer vacation had begun. I planned to resign then, and, taking my young bride to some other place, find, in a remote and quiet school district, a peaceful married future.

The final examinations, closing the term, approached. And then came one of those depressing outbreaks of juvenile depravity which occur, occasionally, in even the best regulated schools.

The teacher of Botany was an elderly female named Miss Murietta Byles, and I may say that she was justly unpopular. She had already antagonised me by complaining to the principal, in a fit of jealousy, of my intimacy with Miss Rowena Philbrick, a matter quite without her jurisdiction. That fact alone is an index to the narrowness of her character. Her complexion was, when not concealed beneath cosmetics, somewhat turbid, if I may express myself that way, and she had been favoured by her pupils with the expressive, if insulting sobriquet "Mud-faced Moll."

This nickname, admirably lettered in red paint, now began to be discovered in the most improbable places. It appeared on the blackboards of the Assembly room to-day, and to-morrow in shocking distinctness upon the school steps, and had to be removed by an arduous day's work with a cold-chisel. "Mud-faced Moll" was found painted on the front of the principal's desk, on the flagging of the school yard, and finally upon every one of a dozen new maps stored in the attic. All efforts to ascertain the identity of the culprit were unavailing, although the principal kept the entire school after hours, and questioned each pupil in turn, in-

dividually and alone. Miss Byles's mortification was so hysterical that she actually had the hardihood to accuse me of perpetrating the outrages. Had it not been for this, I could have been almost amused at the ridiculousness of the farce.

But a new interest now came to drive the subject from my mind. The scholarship averages were computed, and it was discovered to my delight that Rowena led, and was thereby entitled to the valedictory at the graduating exercises. I saw in this the opportunity of doing her a service. As she had no particular literary bent, while my own talents have always been in that direction, I spent several nights in composing a valedictory paper for her that should mark an epoch in the history of the Petaluma High School. Rowena was overjoyed to find herself relieved of a necessity which had been somewhat dreaded.

The day before graduation, a teachers' meeting was called to give the final approval to the candidates for diplomas. I had made a strong effort to prevent Oliver Burne from graduating, feeling that it would be a blot on the high standard of the school to have such a young reprobate dismissed honourably. I was in my room formulating my

argument on this point and summarising the details of his misconduct, when Rowena came to me.

"If you go up to the map-room immediately," she said, "you may catch the boy who has been painting the signs about the building!"

I was surprised, but went at once up-stairs and mounted the ladder to the unfinished attic, where the maps were kept. I was looking about, seeing no one, when my attention was called to a noise below. The Burne boy was removing the ladder!

"Burne," I called to him, "replace that ladder instantly, sir!" He mocked me in the most impudent manner.

"What'll you give me, if I'll let you go?" he said, making a rude gesture.

The supreme impertinence of his demand fairly stifled me. I was surprised; more than that—shocked!

"Burne, I shall attend to your case as soon as I get down," I warned him sternly. I confess my attitude at the time was undignified, almost ridiculous, for there were no floor-boards and I had trouble balancing on the rafters.

Instead of answering me, the little fiend drew out a manuscript and began to read, beginning with a

melodramatic style that grieved and wounded me more than I can say.

"Standing as we do, to-day, upon the threshold of a new career, the sweet old days of childhood not yet quite gone, the mysterious duties of manhood and womanhood not yet quite come, let us face once again the memories of dear school-life, and then make up our minds to go out into the world and do our part in advancing the noblest standards of right and truth that we learned here, in this well-loved place." The boy's inflection and gesticulation were outrageous, and I shuddered to hear my own literary efforts so horribly and wilfully distorted. For, need I say that he had in his possession the valedictory that I had just written for Rowena Philbrick? It was painful beyond words to my shrinking susceptibilities, for I am foolishly sensitive.

"Rowena likes the paper, fine!" the young scamp declared. "I desire to thank you, Mr. Ardley, for the great assistance you have given me, through Rowena." He then went on, with insufferable mock-politeness, "We have both enjoyed your tips on the examination papers very much. It has been a great help. In fact without your invaluable

aid, I doubt if I would be able to graduate. As it is, I stand number four!"

"You will never graduate from this school, young man," I said. "I'll attend to that at teachers' meeting to-day."

"Yes, and give yourself away!" he cried. "Do you want me to tell Mr. Briggs how you've been helping Rowena? Do you mind if I show him this paper?"

The brutality of his plot now struck me with a pang of anguish. How could I ever explain that, in helping Rowena, I had been prompted only by affection and a desire for her best welfare? Technically, I had violated the etiquette of my profession, although it had been done only with the loftiest motives. I measured the distance to the floor. It was altogether too far to risk jumping. I was as much at the boy's mercy as if I were tied to an Apache stake. But the worst was yet to come.

"Now you get busy, Ardie, and do what I tell you, or I'll call Mr. Briggs and give the whole thing away. There's a pot of red paint up there. See it? You just take it and paint 'Mud-faced Moll' on that biggest map of the United States! Hurry up, now!"

I hesitated; yet, after all, what could I do?

"Here comes Mr. Briggs! Shall I call him in?" he asked.

There was no other way. I picked up a brush, reeking with carmine, and, as slowly as I could, I began to letter the abominable words upon the varnished surface of the map.

"Faster, please," said Burne. I obeyed.

At that moment, the principal, who had been looking for me to attend the teachers' meeting, came up-stairs. I did not hear him, but the boy Burne did, and rapidly climbed out the window and hid on the fire-escape. I went on painting, in a trance of sickening despair, when Mr. Briggs entered the hallway and discovered me, just as I was putting the final letters on the disgusting epithet, "Mud-faced Moll." It was one of the most painful moments of my life.

Pardon me if I do not describe my interview with him, which was witnessed by Burne, through the window; a fact which greatly added to my discomfort. I could not, of course, explain, and, for the good name of the school, I was permitted to resign and the matter was kept confidential. I have heard that subsequently the Petaluma "Gazette"

published a garbled account of the affair at the time Rowena and Burne were married.

Oliver Burne graduated, of course, but even that fact was not so harrowing to my feelings as to have to sit with the faculty of the school, upon the platform of the assembly hall, and hear that pretty, innocent-looking girl, scarcely more than a child, read her paper. She concluded with the following words, my own words, looking unblushingly in my direction.

"Above all, let us remember that the faith we place in our friends is the keystone of all that is noblest and best in life, and that what we do for others will be a sustaining influence through the worst of life's vicissitudes and trials."

"*O sacra fama amoris, quis non mortalia pectora coges!*"

THE REIGN OF QUEEN ISYL

IV

THE COMBAT

¶ HOW *Sir Tomas the Scalawag with Queen Isyl quested for La Beale Norine and did battle with a knight. How the Grand Commander was unhorsed, and the Queen met a hermit in a wood: The Tale of Love Militant.*

IT was a May day of that entrancing blue which comes to California skies after the last rains, bringing with it the assurance of continued fair weather, when the two adventurers set out on their quest for Norine. The meadow larks sang in the fields, and Isyl sang too, snatches of song, quite as prettily. Something new and fresh and glad had come into her eyes since last night. She looked slyly at her companion and tried little wiles to make him laugh. He needed small urging, and every smile sank deeper into her heart.

So they sped, in a furious little automobile runabout, over the level roads of the Santa Clara Valley, through miles of ripening orchards. To the east the Coast Range culminated in the peak

of Mount Hamilton, and, through the clear, vibrant air, a white speck, the dome of the Lick Observatory, glimmered like a daystar.

"It's absurd that I don't even know your name yet," Isyl had begun.

"What's in a name?" he answered. "Nothing but a collection of letters, like a post-office. Mine happens to be Thomas Bell Parrish. Have you any objections to the sound of it?"

"No, idiot. But who are you, and where did you come from?"

"I am an obscure but handsome adventurer come to this your sovereign court to gain worship and serve beauty. I am doing the Launcelot act, and as you were the first damsel in distress I happened to meet, I rescued you as per custom of knights-errant."

"Only because I happened to be the first?"

"And because you'll happen to be the last."

"When did you see me first?"

"In a dream. And that's no De Quincey yarn," the youth asserted.

"Mince pie, or Welsh rarebit?" she asked, playfully.

"Wedding cake!" he answered.

Isyl grew suddenly silent.

"I've seen you since," he added, "on the hard, matter-of-fact macadam of San Jose. You were in white pique, or words to that effect, and from that moment I date my decline and fall. I would have said then that you were the penultimate limit, if anybody had driven up in a hansom-cab and asked me. The rest is faery."

"It's all remarkably vague," said Isyl, "there's no use trying to get anything sensible out of you!"

"How about rings?" he suggested, wickedly.

She started to draw off her glove, but he stopped her.

"Remember, it's wished on!"

"It's awfully like one I've seen before, but I can't recall where."

"It's paid for," he remarked.

"How long is it wished on for?" Isyl asked.

"Till I get my wish, of course. But you must wear it as long as you are Queen, anyway."

"That won't be long, for we simply *must* find Norine Almeric. How are you going to do it? Have you a clew yet?"

"All the Sherlock Holmes in me suggests de-

ducing her whereabouts. It looks dead easy in books; let's get in and deduct things. You said you heard a hack drive away from the Pavilion about the time she escaped. Then why not try the livery stables and apply the third degree to the proprietors thereof. The best one, I believe, is Harrison's. We're almost there."

"I'll wager they won't tell you anything," said Isyl.

"Taken," he replied. "What'll you bet?"

"My handkerchief!" she said, and smiled.

Tom Parrish smiled, too, for he had not yet returned the Queen's favour. They were soon in town and stopped before Harrison's stable. A hostler came out, and looked hard at Tom Parrish, for that young man was winking furiously.

"I say, did you rent a cab last night to call at the Pavilion at eight?"

"Nope!" said the man.

"Yes, you did. Where did it go to?"

"Dunno."

"Guess!" said Tom, nodding behind Isyl's back.

"Seems to me they was a carriage drove out to Golcher's place."

"Who was in it?" the Queen demanded, finding information so readily obtained. But she did not see a red head shaking violently.

"Dunno," said the hostler. "The driver's off to-day."

Tom handed him a dollar and turned the lever of his machine. "Do I win?" he asked Isyl.

"I'm afraid you do," she admitted. "But he acted funny, it seems to me."

"Well then," said Tom Parrish, "in the merry days of the Round Table and such pipe-dreams, when the Queen presented a token, like this handkerchief here in my inside pocket, she usually promised forgiveness for anything, when it was refunded. How about that?"

"You find Norine Almeric before the Fiesta is over and I'll give you anything you ask for," she said, recklessly, and could have bitten her tongue out, the next minute.

"I'll just write that down, and you'll kindly sign it," he said, and actually produced a small notebook. She made some delicious objections, but wrote the words, signing them, "Isyl, Regina."

They sped westward through the warm sunshine, as gay as squirrels, until, just before they reached

the road leading to Golcher's, they saw a white horse approaching them.

"I know that mare," Isyl remarked, "it's Ray Ardley's."

"Who is he?" Tom asked.

"He's the Worshipful Grand Commander of the Knight Companions of the Golden Gate, when he has his white trousers on. And he has a foolish idea that I'm his own and particular property."

"I'll joust with him for that right," quoth the youth. "A man with a tag like that ought to be good killing! He seems to be bound our way."

The Grand Commander turned into Golcher's road just ahead of them, and then slowed down somewhat, with a seeming intent to impede their progress. It was a narrow lane with ditches on either side, running between apricot orchards. With an occasional glance over his shoulder and a bit of jockeying, the schoolmaster for a while prevented the automobile from passing him. The Parrish blood began to rise to Tom's cheeks. He took hold of the lever more firmly and said to Isyl, "Do you object to my forcing the game a little? He seems to be the prize Berkshire hog."

"Not at all," she answered. "I don't particu-

larly care to take his dust. He doesn't seem to like you very much. I suppose he hasn't forgiven you for interrupting his flirtation with me. Let's speak to him, but there's no use of having any trouble."

Tom urged his machine a bit faster, and turned to the right. The Grand Commander turned also, in time to head him off.

"Are you going to let us pass?" Tom inquired. "Make way for the Queen, please!"

The Grand Commander turned and bowed as if he had not seen them before. "Good morning, Miss Isyl," he said, and then to Parrish, "I have as much right on this road as you have, and if you want to pass me, go ahead!"

"You look out for a rear-end collision, then, if you don't turn out, my friend with the polysyllabic alias, or I'll plough you off the road!"

"Push ahead!" was the answer. "I don't intend to take any more of your impertinence, sir. I'm sorry for you, Miss Shea, that you have to associate with a jackanapes like this and gad about in a mechanical toy, but you seem to prefer his company to mine, and you'll have to take the consequences, I suppose." And he jogged on.

"That'll be about all for preliminaries," Tom

Parrish muttered, "and I'll now conceal the hand of iron beneath the glove of dogskin. Look out for your hind wheels!" he announced, and gave the handle a sharp twist.

The machine leaped forward with a jerk and carried the light piano-box buggy several yards with it, while Isyl held to the seat in fright. The schoolmaster's horse braced doggedly on his haunches, and the shafts snapped. At this, the mare bolted, the Grand Commander swearing volubly at her heels. The pair soon parted company, however, and the last seen of them was two blackish spots diminishing toward the far end of the orchard, the mare galloping like a frolicsome cow, and the Commander in hot pursuit.

"It was a Sunday newspaper kind of a joke," Tom admitted, "and hardly the sort of humour to appeal to the refined tastes of a Fiesta Queen; but the best way to conquer temptation is to yield to it, I've found!" He tried to start the automobile again, now, but, its work having been so well done, it rested.

"I expect there's a reverse side to our little prank," he said to Isyl.

While the Queen remained on the seat, Tom

puttered underneath the car with a monkey-wrench, but to no avail. The rear axle was sprung out of all but a machinist's help and the chain was broken.

"But we must get back by one o'clock," Isyl gasped, "otherwise there'll be no Queen! What are we going to do?"

Tom rubbed his head. "Haven't you an understudy ready?" he said. "If they started with a full deck, there ought to be two queens left to take the next trick. But you'll ride through town on a float, yet! Where's the nearest telephone?"

"There's a cabin over there in the apricots," said Isyl, pointing. "I don't know what it is, but we might try there."

They walked into the orchard and knocked at the door. It was opened by a young man with a pointed beard, arrayed in brown denim. They explained the shipwreck to him.

"Why, I've got a line to the ranch, and they'll probably telephone a message to the city for you," he said. "Come in!"

They entered the single room of the cabin and he rang up the ranch for them. The proprietor promised to send for assistance. While Isyl looked

about at the photographs on the walls, Tom addressed the man in denim.

"See here," he said, finally, "haven't I seen you before? Aren't you Jeggins, Stanford, '95?"

"Yes, that's right. And who are you, anyway, if you don't mind."

"Parrish, '97, of course. Hadn't my name and fame arisen when you joined the great majority of square heads? Think of that!"

"Seems to me I did hear of the limit of freshness having been reached about that time," the stranger remarked with fraternal jest; "let's see—hundred yard dash, wasn't it?"

"No, I'm no sprinter; the half-mile is my distance. I shaved 2.03 when I was a Soph."

"Did you ever hear of Parson Jones?" Jeggins asked.

"Sure; what about him?"

"Why, the fact is, he's been stopping here with me for a week or so, and last night he didn't show up, that's all. You see I'm the foreman of this ranch, and I bunk alone except when he shares my humble hearth. I'm reading law on the side. Jones is a cub preacher, and what you might call a professor of muscular Christianity. I'm afraid

there's been a fight somewhere. I'm wondering if he could have been at it again."

"A scrap, and me not in it?" said Parrish, hungrily.

"Queer kind of a clergyman," Isyl remarked; "if you really mean that you think he has been fighting."

"Oh, I won't say that," Jeggins explained. "I expect he's all over that by now, but there was a time when he wouldn't have been far away from a good battle. Remember his last fight at Woodside?" he asked of Tom.

"Remember? Why, I invented that yarn," Tom said, grinning.

"It's true!" protested Jeggins.

"Don't mind him," Isyl broke in, "he's crazy. I'm treating him for it. Tell me about it, won't you?"

"Go ahead," Tom added. "It'll be an hour or so before the gasoline sharp shows up with a new steam-engine. "I'd like to hear how the story has grown and multiplied!"

And so, while Tom Parrish sat beside his Queen, on a fruit crate in the cabin, Mr. Jeggins narrated

THE COMBAT

The Story of the Apricot Rancher

A WOODSIDE IDYL

Or, Love Militant

ABOUT ten miles up the line from the Leland Stanford Jr. University lies the little town of Woodside, where an overworked student may forget his cares in the joys of rural society. When rain has been plenty and crops good, the farmers of the county gather at Woodside and bring their girls. Undergraduates occasionally condescend to be amongst those present and they are strictly in it. A fellow may be as homely as Parrish here, but he fries eggs if he comes from the University. Cross-eyed or slow in the head, it makes no difference if he wears a Junior plug.

The Venus of Woodside, in my time, was Nellie Hawkins. She certainly was a winner. She went through every dance in the county that year like a prairie fire, burning men up right and left. Woodside was the main office of her heart-cracking establishment. She used to drive to the dances with her old father, who slept in the dressing room while she twirled. When she got ready

to go, she'd ring him up all rested and ready for another day's work.

Well, they gave a dance at Woodside just before Thanksgiving in my Freshman year and a lot of us went. Nellie was there, of course, and looking dangerous. In my young innocence I laid for her and prepared for victory or death. I got the second mazurka; then I located the third waltz; finally, I persuaded her to cut out a red-headed farmer, who had the last lancers, and we sailed down the hall, the social success of the occasion. But I rejoiced too early.

We were whirling around on "grand right and left" when I saw the red-headed yap, who owned that dance, making for our corner of the hall. I got to Nellie just then; we stopped and swung to our place.

"You see that fellow," she said to me.

"I do," says I; "who is he?"

"He thinks he's my steady," she says, "but I ain't so sure. There are others." Then she turned her azure beads on me and I perished with joy.

Just then the farmer got there. He didn't say a word to her, but he felt of my arm.

"Look here, young fellow," he says, "I'd like to see you outside after this dance."

"You ain't afraid, are you?" she says when he had sloped.

Well, I was. A man with the ague would have seemed liked a marble statue alongside of me. But her asking that way settled my nerve. I was ready to die game. I went outside, with the fellows to see fair play, and we mixed.

I have always maintained that I hit him once; but it must be my vanity, for no one else saw me score. The red-headed yap was a cyclone on ball-bearings. He mauled me until his native mercy asserted itself. Excuse me if I drop the veil. The light and gayety went out of the occasion for me. Nell Hawkins saw what was left of me, when I was getting my coat. She didn't say anything; she just stood off and gave me the silvery ha-ha. It was a harsh night for little Edward.

I was only a Freshman then and I realise now with a chastened sense that I deserved to be licked. But it everlastingly got to me at the time. So, for personal vengance and the glory of the college, I collaborated with the composite freshman intellect and we struck a scheme. It involved Parson Jones.

Besides being the greatest bucking full-back ever, Jones had the pulpit fever, and was studying for the ministry. No one ever saw how he could play foot-ball. He looked meek and serious, and was stoop-shouldered and not very big. His muscle didn't show much through his clothes.

His chief trouble about foot-ball was that he would naturally sail in and fight, if the other fellow played dirty ball, and this used to bother him a lot. One time in a match game, he went up to the referee after the first half and said, "See here, you'd better rule me off the gridiron. I struck that quarter-back without provocation." But the referee only said, "I didn't see it, you get back to your position."

There was one year he swore he wouldn't play at all. He said that he couldn't keep his temper, once it got started, and he ought to avoid temptation if he ever expected to preach. It took the whole college to get him into the eleven again. But we had to keep good watch on him, because we knew that if he ever got started to slugging in a practice game, he would pull out for the season. The second team went in that year, with instructions to run away if Jones started in to fight.

To resume. We knew that the Parson would do the trick for us, if we could ever drag him up to Woodside and turn him loose on the red-headed farmer. But it took considerable scheming to bring it off. The Committee of Investigation found, however, that there was going to be the biggest time of the year at Woodside on Christmas eve and that the Parson wasn't going home before the holidays. So we sent "Bug" Rey to persuade him.

The dancing was the critical point, but the Bug told him that if he was going to preach to the farmers he ought to meet them in their hours of recreation. The Parson said that he was not opposed to dancing in general, though he didn't think it seemly for the clergy, and as it appeared to be innocent and respectable, he promised to attend the entertainment.

We got there a little late; things were going full blast. After a preliminary scout, we put the Parson up against Nell Hawkins and left him spieling to her. Right here was where the Steering Committee got in its keen work. We butted in and made ourselves agreeable. We peeled off our haughty air and mixed. Our team work was

perfect. Each one of us nailed a man in Nell's string and edged him off, interfering to give the parson a chance. I had the red-headed farmer; that hurt some, but I seen my duty, and I done it. We got real friendly, durn him! By and by I ran him off with the Bug to have a drink, while I went back to take a look.

Say, the Parson was all right. He had that girl hypnotised. He was sitting on the bench beside her manufacturing serious rhetoric, and she was lamping him as though he were the only one within two hundred and ten miles. She had sat out two dances with him. If the Parson can preach the way he can con, he'll be a regular Henry Ward Beecher. I judged that the time had come for the event of the evening, and I signalled out of the window for the Bug to trot in the victim.

You couldn't guess what that budding preacher was doing before they got back! Well, there was a bunch of mistletoe in a sort of entry outside the hall. The rustics had been doing their uncouth gambols under it all the evening. Nell sidled outside pretending that she wanted air and stood there looking inviting. Honest, I didn't think that

Parson would kiss her, but she was a sure enough temptation for any man. She was a beaut.

"Now you stop!" she says, and just then the farmer got into the field of vision.

I won't repeat the yap's comment, but it was not pretty. The Parson stood off and looked meek. Nell giggled.

"You little runt," says the farmer, "I won't bother to smash you, but I'm going to just naturally shake the innards out of you!"

I could see the Parson's back begin to come up. I knew he was wrestling with temptation, but all he said was, "You'd better not touch me, sir!"

The farmer smiled, and ducked his head as though he were making a low tackle and bumped into the Parson, caught him low by the waist around both arms. Then he proceeded to shake him, the way a terrier shakes a rat. He was twice as big and strong as our man, and I began to hae me serious doots. The Parson had no chance to exhibit his nerve and science in that style of fighting. But it did one good thing, though,—it got him blazing, foaming mad.

The farmer finished his shake and then started to let go—and then, Lord love us! you would

have cried with joy to see the fireworks. Parson put the heel of his fist into the yap's chin and broke that cinch hold to flinders. The next thing that happened, our red-headed friend went up in the air and down like a rocket, with me yelling my head loose in a corner. The farmer got up like a rubber ball, though, and rushed after Parson, and that was what we wanted. Our man stood off and shot 'em in, heavy and hard, one swipe after another. But the farmer was game, and a glutton for punishment. He was in love and the girl was watching, chewing her handkerchief to bits.

The farmer stood for it till he saw about sixteen Parsons, and then we pried 'em apart. You ought to have viewed the remains!

What d'you think Nell Hawkins did? In the classic annals of the Eternal Feminine, she's always supposed to tag the victor and elope with the Might makes Right proposition, but instead, Nell jumped for the loser.

"O, George! are you hurt?" she says, and she went to crying over him until her sleepy old father woke up, and came out of the dressing-room to investigate. It was intruding upon a family party

to stay, so we pulled out from motives of delicacy and a desire to celebrate.

The Parson didn't say anything for a long time. After a while he put his hand to his eye, which was damaged some, and said:

"I've been fighting again!"

"You have!" says the Bug; "and it was the greatest since Marathon!"

"And I have behaved improperly with a woman, and you fellows led me into temptation. And I was to preach to-morrow, too!" So he was; his first Christmas sermon, at a little country church four or five miles from Woodside.

"What was the text?" the Bug asked him. "'Peace on earth,' and so forth?"

"Yes," says the Parson.

"Change it to something like 'Whatsoever thy right hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,'" said the Bug.

But the Parson only looked kind of reproachful and refused to join our festivity. He got some other embryo preacher to do his Christmas turn for him, and he was never quite the same to us afterward. The only drag on our big celebration, after we got home, was the absence of the star performer.

Nell Hawkins married the red-headed farmer, and may the Lord have mercy on their souls. She sent us all invitations, too, tickets with her card inclosed—name written fancy by a Spencerian expert under a flap with a bouquet and two clasped hands labelled "Friendship's Offering" printed in purple and green—the kind you get by mail from Augusta, Maine, with the latest popular songs, a complete guide to courtship and a rolled gold ring, all for ten cents. And when we showed up at the ceremony, darned if Parson Jones wasn't the referee! He was ordained by that time, but they had sent for him, all the way to Sacramento, where he was preaching for $400 a year.

When it was over, the farmer tried to crowd a twenty onto Parson Jones, but he wouldn't have it. "No fee, please," he says, "I have been well paid. I used to like to fight, before I conquered the old Adam in me, and I got my last good one out of you. It was wicked, but I enjoyed it as I have never enjoyed anything before or since. But if you had only held on when you had me going," he added, dropping his voice so the rest wouldn't hear, "I wouldn't be here to tell the tale. Never give the other man a chance to get at you at long

range, unless you're sure of him, and I hope that you two will be happy in wedlock and walk in the ways of righteousness all your days."

No, Parson Jones wouldn't take a fee for that hitching, though I guess he needed the money pretty fierce. But he got back at 'em about a year later. The Parson always charges the regular union rate for christenings—five dollars a dip.

V

THE PAGEANT

¶ HOW *Queen Isyl rode in state through the city, and saw a face at a window. How the Chamberlain sought to discover the mystery and was hindered by a stranger, and how the two outwitted the spy: The Tale of Love Sartorial.*

BY the time Isyl had reached home, dressed for the street parade, and got back to the Pavilion, the procession was ready to start. The Chamberlain was nearly prostrated with the suspense when it was found that her whereabouts was unknown. To have to provide a third Queen

would have been too much. The Grand Commander had returned in a towering rage.

With much confusion of orders the several divisions were got into their places in line and the order given by the Grand Marshal to start. Every possible organisation was represented, from the civic displays of the fire and police departments to the military corps of the regulars and the National Guard. Besides these were innumerable vehicles bedecked with flowers, floats representing different industries, fraternal societies, school-children, Chinese tongs bearing their sacred dragon, and the Board of Trade in hacks.

The Queen's float was a sumptuous affair decorated with flowers and bunting. Roses were applied like paint, and from the row of columns rising from the base, festoons and garlands were hung in gorgeous profusion. The Ladies-in-Waiting sat on a semicircular seat, while above them, raised high in air on a gilded throne, Queen Isyl surveyed the town and received the acclamations of the populace. The San Jose Commandery of the Knights of the Golden Gate on horseback, in white vaquero costume, acted as the Queen's guard of honour.

When tne procession passed under the floral arch that crossed First Street, the magnificence of the city's decoration manifested itself in a dazzling profusion of flags and bunting. The main street was a bewildering perspective, of changing colors. Overhead, from balcony to balcony and housetop to housetop stretched arches, festoons, and banners, reaching away into the distance, making the route of the procession a brilliant tunnel of purple and gold, while on either side of the street a vast throng of people in holiday array was massed like two banks of flowers ribboning the alley of some Brobdingnag garden.

As her float progressed, there came up to Isyl from the crowd a murmur of innumerable voices, combined in one strange sustained chord, while before her and behind the brisk music of military bands crashed in dissonance. Handkerchiefs waved, an occasional cheer broke forth, and from every possible window were men and women, staring. She was confused by the bewildering sights and sounds, and embarrassed by the feeling that she was a usurper. She had done her best to find the true Queen, but accident had baffled her search. The mysterious stranger had left her

again, and again she was alone in the face of gazing thousands. She wished it were over.

The parade countermarched, and her float, after returning down First Street, came to a temporary halt near the floral arch. She was looking absently into the packed second-story windows along the line of march, when her eyes were drawn to a single face.

It was Norine Almeric. Though she had but an instant's vision, Isyl was sure of that. Norine stood a little back from a window, but from the height of the queen's throne she was plainly visible. Her expression was that of a person in great distress.

Isyl had scarcely time to recognise her, however, when Norine disappeared from the window, and at the same time the float lurched forward. A hundred feet further the procession halted again, and Isyl looked down into the street for someone to whom she could tell the astonishing news. The Chamberlain, who, riding at the head of the parade, had already finished the route, and was returning to witness the pageant as a spectator, was making his way toward her, nodding to various friends right and left.

Isyl caught his eye and beckoned to him. He ran up and climbed one of the wheels of the float to a whispering distance as she leaned to him.

"I saw Norine Almeric!" she called cautiously, so that her ladies might not hear. "She was in the window of a house over the 'Star' Billiard Hall. Can't you go and see what it means? She may be kept there against her will!"

He nodded, jumped down and made his way back up the street. The colloquy had of course been visible to everyone, although it had not been overheard, and among the observers there happened to be a special writer for the San Francisco "Enquirer." The scene was not lost upon him. It might mean an important story. So he, too, elbowed his way through the crush, and followed the Chamberlain.

Just before the procession started again, Isyl, looking over a board fence, which screened him from the street, saw Tom Parrish run through a vacant yard in the direction of the house where Norine had appeared. She watched him in surprise until the float carried her out of sight, but just before that he entered a side door of the block. Then she was swept on down the street.

The Chamberlain, forcing his way through the crowd, reached the "Star" Billiard Parlours. Its doors were wide open to the street, disclosing a row of tables, a bar, and, in the rear, a glazed door. Beside the street door was another leading into a narrow hall from which stairs arose, and on the right of this hall there was entrance into the billiard parlours.

Seeing that the parlours were deserted, he passed through this side entrance and started upstairs to investigate the second story, passing a sign which read "Star Hotel. Rooms by the Day or Week." Half way up, he was met by a man descending.

The stranger was a well-formed Englishman with a smooth face, dressed in grey tweeds; a jolly, muscular-looking man of twenty-eight or so. He stood blocking the passage and said, good-naturedly enough,

"I say, old chap, what d'you happen to be looking for, if you don't mind?"

"That's none of your business that I know of," said the Chamberlain, attempting to force his way past. "Who are you, anyway?"

"I might make the same retort, don't you know, but I won't. Here's my card, if you like, but I'm

afraid you mayn't go upstairs just now, you know. I wouldn't insist, if I were you."

"What's going to prevent my going up?" said the Chamberlain, hesitating.

"My word, what do you expect I'm standing here for, old chap?" said the Briton.

"What right have you to prevent me?" the Chamberlain blustered, but without attempting to set foot on the next step. Instead, he glanced at the card, which read "Mr. J. Montgomery Lee."

"I have the right of superior biceps and a good old-fashioned desire to make trouble with them for you, if you insist on being an ass," was the reply.

"Is Miss Almeric up there? If she is, I want to see her!" the Chamberlain demanded.

"Miss Almeric is not up there, I give you my word for that. But if she were, you couldn't see her, I give you my word for that, too. It's my opinion you're pretty jolly impertinent, you know."

At this moment the "Enquirer" reporter, still on the trail of the Chamberlain, appeared at the door below. The Chamberlain instantly changed his attitude, for it would not do for the papers to get hold of this information. The idea seemed to strike J. Montgomery Lee at the same time. He

winked, and, with this tacit understanding, the two descended the stairs.

"What's up?" said the reporter.

"Nothing that I know of, except the price of purple bunting," said Lee. "Why?"

"Oh, we saw the Queen send his jags off here on some errand in a hurry, and it looked like a story to me. Say, put me wise! I'm from the 'Enquirer,' you know. The more we get about this show the more free advertising you get."

Lee escorted him into the billiard parlours with a little forcible politeness, handling him by the left elbow. The Chamberlain followed, noticing that the door in the partition had a window through which anyone who descended the stairs could be easily seen. The three men took seats in a corner, and Lee offered his companions cigars.

"The fact is," he said, "there is a small story, though I must say I'm sorry you've discovered it. If you'll promise to hold it back till to-morrow or next day, I'll give you the scoop, and I'll see that none of the other papers get it. But really, you know, it's not much. I'd much prefer you wouldn't use it."

"Well, you go ahead with the news, and I'll

hold it out," said the reporter. "You understand I'm not a common ordinary reporter, I'm a special writer sent down here to do the general fluff and flim-flam of the Fiesta from the sidewalk point of view. But if this is news, we have to have it, and we'll handle it as considerately as possible."

"That's very decent of you, really," said J. Montgomery Lee. "You see it's no end of a delicate matter to me, and I'd be pretty badly cut up if the thing got out, at least if it were published directly. The fact is, my wife's upstairs with two trained nurses, and she's a bit out of her head, don't you know. She'd had nervous prostration, and her brain's slightly affected. She thinks she's a Queen. I expect that reading about all this Fiesta rot, and the election and such poppycock rather got on her nerves. When they began to decorate the town she got the idea that it was all on her account, don't you know, and so I rented a room here just to humour her and see the parade. She was quiet enough till the Queen's float came by, and then she had a 'crise de nerfs.' I'm going to take her up to Agnews to-morrow, where she can be nursed, and I rather hope the attack will pass off. She's very delicate and high-strung, that's all."

The reporter smiled at the Chamberlain. "It's too bad!" he said. He turned to Mr. Lee. "What did you say your name was?"

"Parker, Thaddeus Q."

"If you don't mind, I'll make a note of it," said the special writer.

"Oh, you're welcome to," said Lee, and he stood up, intimating that the interview was finished.

The reporter, however, made no move to go. It was evident that he was not so easily deceived as Mr. Lee had hoped. The truth was, he had not failed to notice the fact that the Chamberlain had been watching the door in the partition ever since they entered the parlours. So he put his feet on a chair and thoughtfully examined the lighted end of his cigar.

"I expect that's about all I have to say," said Lee, finally.

"Oh, there's no hurry. I have nothing to do for a while," the reporter answered, yawning.

Things were thus at a deadlock, the Chamberlain watching Lee, Lee watching the Chamberlain, and the reporter watching both, and all three with one eye on the glazed door, when a man entered the billiard parlours from the rear. He had red hair.

As he reached Lee's chair, he tapped that gentleman on the back twice.

"Well, Gummy, what's doing?" he asked, inspecting the two others.

"Plenty," Lee replied. "Here's a reporter has got hold of the story of my wife's insanity already, and I had to give him the details."

"Oh!" said Tom Parrish, "and our little friend in the incredible regalia here?"

"He seems to be equally inquisitive," said Lee.

"You seem to take your wife's trouble rather calmly," the reporter remarked, chewing his cigar.

"Gummy Lee is a Briton, my friend and scribe," said Tom Parrish, "and he prides himself on never having been surprised but once in his life. That was when he was taken for an American at the Moulin Rouge."

"You fellows are all right. The only trouble with Mr. Lee is that he sports too many pseudonyms. Last I heard of him, his name was Parker." The reporter awaited a reply, with his arms folded.

Tom Parrish grinned. "By Jove, Gummy, I didn't know you had that much imagination. I'm positively proud of you. What was the fairy tale?"

"Never mind, it didn't fool me a little bit," said the reporter. "Only, I've found that a man with several names to spare usually has a good story up his sleeve, and I want it."

The Chamberlain had come to the conclusion that Miss Almeric, if she had been in the house, was now safely away, and he rose to go. "I hope I'll meet you again, Mr. Lee," he said, giving that gentleman a meaning look. Then he left to find the Queen.

The reporter, however, not knowing the tenor of Isyl's communication to the Chamberlain, preferred to wait and watch the two friends, for he had transferred his suspicions to the Briton. He began, therefore, to talk volubly, in the desire to ingratiate himself with these men, and, if possible by patient waiting to witness the development of the situation. Something he was sure had happened in that building, or was about to happen, or they would not remain.

He watched the retreating form of the Chamberlain with a smile.

"Funny how some men like dress," he remarked. "It's natural for women to want to light themselves up, but when a man gets the clothes habit there's

generally a screw loose somewhere. Vanity doesn't quite account for it. There's been a great deal of discussion in the papers about whether women dress for women or for men. It's my opinion they dress for themselves. But when a man begins to watch the fashion tips, he does it with malice aforethought. It reminds me of a rather queer example of that, I ran across in San Francisco once."

His two auditors manifested a mild curiosity to hear the narrative, and he succeeded in delaying them for a quarter of an hour with

The Story of the Special Writer

THE MATINEE PARADE

Or, Love Sartorial

THERE was a chap in San Francisco named Timothy Cobb. He worked in a chandelier factory on Mission Street, as a brass spinner, and he was a good one, too. He was as ordinary and as harmless a guy as any workman in the shop until he began to read the clothing-store ads in the newspapers and then he emerged from the chrysalis and became a wonder. It came about this way.

Every city, more or less, has its pet particular

show, where you go to see and be seen. There's the church parade in Hyde Park, Sunday mornings, and the Broadway Rialto in New York, for instance. But the pride and the joy and the glory and the boast of middle-class San Francisco is the matinee parade, every Saturday afternoon from 4.30 to 5, down Market Street from Powell, and up Kearney Street to Bush, and back again. Here's where you find out what San Francisco women look like when they have their war-paint on, and what the cheap sports about town think of 'em. It's as good a show of beauty and impertinence and vanity and clothes as you can find on the continent of North America, and it isn't half appreciated, except by the loafers that hang up in front of the cigar shops on the line of march.

Now when the Brass-workers' Union succeeded in getting Saturday afternoon off, Tim Cobb began to haunt the parade and pick favourites in the beauty contest, like the rest of the rounders. He had, like a good many San Francisco boys who have never been out of the State, an idea that the visible axis of the universe stuck out of Lotta's Fountain, at the corner of Market and Kearney, and his highest ambition at that time was to have a room

over the dentist's office at the Geary Street gore, and see life out of his window, night and day, as it is lived in the giddiest town in the U. S.

Now, about this time there was a girl who carried off all the honours in the parade by universal consent. She was the limit in feminine apparel, and a good-looker, with a figure into the bargain.

She was the without-which-is-nothing of the show, the blue-ribbon entry of the parade, and so well known to the cigar-stand loafers and the curbstone rubbers that they called her "The Latest." The women that passed her in the line would stare over their shoulders for as long as she was in sight, looking her up and down and making mental memoranda of her outfit the way women will. She always walked alone and never looked right nor left.

The very newest things in female togs always came out on "The Latest" before any other woman had so much as a chance. If the fashion notes said big hats were coming in, she'd appear next Saturday in the biggest one on the street. If sleeves grew littler, she'd beat any girl in the parade, and in fact, most of the time she was about two jumps ahead of the first authentic reports on styles. You

could tell, or a woman could, by looking at her on Saturday afternoon, just what the women's pages in the Sunday supplements would have pictures of next day. If she didn't show up till late, all the matinee girls in the procession would wait till she hove in sight before they'd dare to go home.

When Timothy saw her, in the first automobile coat of the season, holding her skirts through the pocket, the way the Sunday papers told how, he surrendered. He went crazy over that girl, though he recognised that she was way out of his class, and he began to play for her.

Looking himself over, in a calm, impersonal way, he saw that he couldn't qualify for such a queen as "The Latest." He'd been wearing a rather shiny black diagonal cutaway and his necktie was the come-easy, ready-made stripe. He decided he'd have to take a brace.

Now you know how advertising goes in streaks, one firm trying to beat another. Sometimes the papers are full of tobacco ads, and sometimes it's breakfast-mush poems, and sometimes it's furniture jollies. At this time the ready-made clothing shops were splurging big, and the write-ups and pictures

read like circus posters. And so Timothy got the tip. The Reager Brothers certainly had an ad writer who could hurl rhetoric. The firm was then pushing an overcoat called "The Rambler," the newest thing for swell dressers, for $12.78, and one glance at the parade was enough to show that they were selling 'em fast. "The Rambler" had a nifty little diagonal pocket that tipped off the brand, and there was no mistaking it a block away. Every self-respecting goat in the line had blown himself for the proper shell.

By giving up the theatre for next week, and standing off his laundry bill, Timothy managed to hold out $12.78 on pay-day, and at four o'clock he was a thoroughbred "Rambler" as far as outsides went, for a long overcoat covers a multitude of sartorial sins. But when he looked in the glass, he had to acknowledge that his Derby hadn't that catchy flare shown in the windows of the swellest hatters, and his shoes, bought at a bargain-sale, were months behind the proper thing. He almost gave up in despair, but the sight of his inaccessible queen in a plaid tunic made him determine to be worthy of her.

That week he took up Reager Brothers' section

of the paper and he read an argument something like this:

"Why not get one of our snappy, dashing Blackenwhite effects? A brisk, stylish, cleverly-tailored suit for $9.66! It has a hang and a swing to it, a set and a go about it that satisfies the smartest dressers in town. It has the broad-shouldered cut, and the wide-rolled lapel revers that are the rage this season. Modelled on the most exclusive lines of the latest mode, and built of the sauciest suitings, finished with style by artists in every particular. Only $9.66 while they last, and it won't be long!"

Timothy bought a Blackenwhite effect next Saturday, and had but twelve cents left. He borrowed from a chap in the shop and contemplated his queen at a respectful distance. But alas! "The Rambler" had now been superseded by the "Beau Brummel" Spring topper overcoat, with four pockets and buttons. Moreover, his hat and shoes were anachronistic. The swell dressers were buying Alpines with Panama rolls, and, for footwear, the popular choice of the real-thing sports was the opera-toed oak-tan bluchers.

Timothy now began to work in the factory as he had never worked before. Inspired by the desire to gain worship in the eyes of the "Latest" he

became a fiend at the turning-lathe. He worked during noon hours, he worked overtime at night, in spite of all the rules of the Brass-workers' Union. He went without cigarettes and he walked back and forth from the factory. He left his boarding-house, took a hall bedroom and ate at a Japanese restaurant.

But he could never quite keep up with the styles. He sold his "Rambler" to a second-hand clothing dealer for $3.50 and bought a "Beau Brummel" topper. Just then the "Blackenwhite effects" gave way to the reign of "Scotch Greens" and a suit of this popular and modish worsted cost him $13.40. He achieved opera toes just as the fashion changed to "Walkabout" heels, and his late imitation Panama roll for $2.13 appeared just as the parade donned the "Florodora" pearl felt headpieces without bands or ribbon. Meanwhile, the queen of his desire walked alone, gowned in "The Latest" bell skirts with military blouse and raglan, remote from possibility. He followed her, dumbly paying her homage. Once, in a fit of ambition consequent upon a purchase of a buff canvas waistcoat, he ventured to nod to her. He was not quite sure whether or not she answered the salute.

But Timothy's zeal at the factory was not unnoticed. His devotion and industry soon caused him to be promoted to be a stock clerk and assistant foreman, and his salary was increased by $7 weekly. Every cent of it went into the till of Reager Brothers.

He was now almost able to keep up with the latest novelties in dress, and every Saturday he had a talk with one of Reager's salesmen to obtain the first tip on new importations. He still lived in the hall bedroom and dined at the Japanese restaurant, but the dazzling prospect of being the best dressed man in the Saturday afternoon parade seemed near at hand. He was made foreman of the shop with another raise of salary, and then he began to welter in clothes.

He had a fine contempt, by this time, for tailor-made raiment. You never saw tailors' advertisements in the Sunday papers—how could one tell what was what, if you went to an obscure shop without a show window and were secretly measured for a suit? Everyone who read the papers knew that Reager Brothers were "world-beaters for overcoats," that they employed only the highest priced union labour, and handled only the most

exclusive designs. Their tag in the neckband of a suit made that suit absolutely correct.

He was pointed out, now, by the lookers-on at the parade, as one of the stars. He began to be a bit original, selecting ties a shade different from those the Reagers showed in their cases, and, to his delight, his choice was copied. Girls would smile at him, and whisper as he went by. And then, to make his success assured, "The Latest" began bowing to him regularly as she passed him. But both still walked alone. He dreamed of her when he slept, but even yet he dared not actually address her.

One day while he was, as usual, in jumper and overalls, helping an apprentice at the lathe, the speaking-tube whistled, and word was called up that a lady was coming upstairs to pick out a chandelier in the stock-room. He met her at the elevator, and wilted with mortification. It was "The Latest!"

She was all smiles and good graces, and never seemed to notice his greasy working clothes, and he managed to find the chandelier she wished, hardly daring to look her in the eye, she who was the ideal of his wildest fancies, the stylish fashion-

plate of the Matinee Parade. She spoke to him as to an old friend, even as to an equal, and, to his surprise, handed him a card when she left and asked him to call on her.

He read the inscription, "Miss Gerty Baggo, 2006 O'Farrell Street," in a daze, and he resolved to call on her that very night, to remove the loathsome impression that he knew his overalls had made on her.

He went to his room, and looked over his clothes as a general inspects his battalions. He selected first one of his refined shirtings and adjusted to it a nobby collar of the exact height recommended that week by the favourite haberdasher. This he garnished with a tie described in the show window of the same shop as "ultramondaine." He drew his trousers from beneath the mattress where they had been pressing, he picked one out of five fancy waistcoats, and donned a Reager coat cut with the latest round-hip effect. Then he sallied forth, a bit uncertain still as to his attire. He could not be quite sure that his 48-cent pin-dotted open-work black hose had not been superseded since Saturday.

He called at 2006 O'Farrell Street, and was shown into the boarding-house parlour by the land-

lady. She took his printed card and soon returned saying that Miss Baggo would be right down. This gave Tim Cobb time for a swift look into the mirror over the mantel. Then he arranged himself as gracefully as possible upon a sofa, stretched the crease in his trousers tight, ran his hand across his hair, and pulled down his cuffs so that they showed about three-quarters of an inch of imported fancy twilled madras.

Miss Baggo came at last. Timothy, giving her time for an impression before he rose, greeted her in undisguised amazement.

She wore an old grey wrapper; her hair was in kid curl-papers; her feet were incased in red knit worsted slippers. It is very much to Mr. Cobb's credit that he still thought her wonderful. His queen could do no wrong.

"How de do," she said, and then, "why I thought of course you'd wear your old clothes! Why didn't you?"

Timothy was speechless. Miss Baggo went on, as she seated herself beside him like an old friend,

"I just do get so tired of *having* to dress up, it's a relief to be able to wear what I please, in any comfortable old way, and I thought you'd feel so,

too. To-morrow Stitcher & Baste get their new Fall styles, and they'll be tighter than ever. I'm awfully sick of the job—aren't you?"

He was staring at her in a daze, and she stopped and looked at him.

"Why!" she said, "I haven't made a mistake, have I? Don't you dress for the Reager Brothers? I thought of course they hired you!"

VI

THE QUEST

¶ HOW *Queen Isyl was impeached of treason and besought the service of her knights. Of their quest for La Beale Norine, and how the Grand Commander rescued a fair damsel in distress: The Tale of Love Insidious.*

THE Chamberlain, feeling sure that nothing further was to be discovered of Miss Almeric's whereabouts, hurried to the Queen and told her of his ill success. The fact that Tom Parrish had again appeared in connection with Norine's mysterious disappearance did

not escape Isyl's notice, though she could not think what it might mean.

She had dismissed the Chamberlain and was still in her dressing-room at the Pavilion, when, answering a knock at the door, she found Bob Almeric, Norine's father, in a high state of rage.

"See here, I want to have a talk with you, young lady," he said gruffly, "and if you don't tell what you know, by Jove, I'll see that you're made to! Now, where's my daughter?"

"I don't know! I thought she was at home, ill."

"You know better than that!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I did see her to-day at a window over the 'Star' Billiard Hall, but you said yourself that she was at home."

"Of course I said so. Do you think I want a scandal out in all the papers? I thought you knew something about it! What is she doing in the 'Star' Hotel?"

"I don't know! Really, I don't!" Isyl protested. "We tried to find her there, but she had gone. That's all I know about it!"

"Well, where's she gone?" he demanded.

"I don't know," she repeated. "I wish I did!"

"This is a pretty kettle of fish!" he growled. "It's going to make a whole lot of trouble for somebody, and don't you forget that, young lady! Norine's mad enough to do almost anything crazy, but this is a little too much. It looks to me like she has been spirited away. See here, Isyl Shea, you were the one who saw her last, in this very room. You were her rival in the voting and your friends all had a grouch because you weren't elected. They cost me a whole lot of money, too. I hear the Knights of the Golden Gate threatened to boycott the Fiesta, and as it was, they didn't show up till you were crowned. It looks pretty suspicious to me. I believe they kidnapped Norine, and are holding her, and I believe you had a hand in it. Here you are, the only one to profit by her being away, you're wearing my daughter's shoes, by Jove, and it's up to you to tell where she is, or I'll make a row about it."

"You needn't threaten me," Isyl replied, pretty angry herself by this time. "I don't know anything about it, and that's all I've got to say."

Bob Almeric had watched her closely to detect the slightest sign of falsehood, and just at that minute, as Isyl raised her hand to fasten a hat-

pin, he caught sight of the sapphire ring she still wore.

"Let's look at that ring!" he cried, taking a step toward her. "By Jove, I believe that's Norine's ring. You don't know anything about it, do you. Where did you get that ring, then?"

Isyl, now thoroughly aroused, put her hand behind her. "It's my own ring!" she asserted stoutly. "Never you mind where I got it. You shan't see it, either. You needn't come here and try to bully me, if you are the boss of the county! I'm not afraid of you!"

"I'll have you prove that, young lady. It looks to me a good deal worse than I had suspected, even. You'd better look out for yourself, or else confess now!"

"Will you kindly leave my room?" Isyl exclaimed, her eyes flashing.

He departed, muttering threats, and, as soon as the door had closed behind him, Isyl broke down. Why had she lied about the ring for the sake of a man she had known but two days? Whose was the ring, and if it were Norine's, how had Tom Parrish obtained it? Her mind was full of doubt. When Tom was accused she could stand up for

him against anybody, and even lie for him, but, alone with herself and her suspicions, it was unbearable. Bob Almeric's words, too, had an ominous sound. He was powerful and he could, as he said, make trouble for her. She must in some way discover where Norine was, and her friends, the Knights of the Golden Gate, who had been also accused, must help her. It was not impossible that they knew something about the matter, for now her suspicions of the Grand Commander's words came back to her.

"You must remember that I prophesied this," he had said, and again, "We fooled them, this time!" Could it be possible that the mincing, pretty, asinine schoolmaster possessed spirit enough to plan an abduction? She could not believe it. She wished Tom Parrish were here to advise her.

Throwing on a wrap she went down-stairs alone, evading the chaperones, picked her way through the crowded streets, and reached the headquarters of the Knights of the Golden Gate. The place was boiling with riotous youths in uniform, for the San Jose Commandery was keeping open house for the refreshment of the visiting Knights. There

was a babel of talk and laughter and a great scurrying of waiters with plates and glasses.

The Queen appeared to be the only woman in the place, but she was too excited to be embarrassed. She approached the first man she met and asked for the Grand Commander. She was shown upstairs to a room where he was entertaining several high officers of the Order.

He came forward to greet her with a look of great surprise, and the visitors arose to leave the room. Isyl detained them with a gesture.

"Please remain, gentlemen, she said, regally, "I have come on official business and I need your help. It is a matter which concerns the honour of the Knights of the Golden Gate!"

She was then introduced to the several Worshipful Scribes, Senior Wardens, Seneschals, Guardians of the Seal, Chancellors and so on, but would not be seated, and stood proudly erect while she told her story, first asking of them a pledge of secrecy.

Isyl was young and pretty; the pageantry and ceremonies of the Fiesta had given her a position which, if not serious, was picturesque. The scene was dramatic. The Knights, having played at this romantic game in lodge and conclave, all titled and

bearing their secret insignia, knowing pass-word and countersign, grip and symbol, felt the spirit of adventure stir merrily within them. They eagerly consented to undertake the quest, and promised the Queen their allegiance. One and all protested ignorance of any knowledge of Miss Almeric's whereabouts, and denied having plotted to place their candidate upon the throne. Indeed, it seemed that these high officers rather regretted not having thought of so attractively desperate a conspiracy.

The Grand Commander stood somewhat aloof, sulkily. His resentment against the Queen for the way she had, as he thought, trifled with him, was embarrassing now, when she came to ask favours at his hands. But upon reflection he was glad of it. Nothing would serve his petty spite better than that his scorner should be dethroned, and her rival reinstated. So he, too, pledged himself willingly to the effort to find Miss Almeric.

She gave them the only hint of Norine's movements that she knew, and it was decided first to mount and ride out to Golcher's to see what might be found there. It was five o'clock when they descended and sent urgent orders for their horses.

As Isyl walked away from the Headquarters, es-

corted by a visiting Knight, she was abstracted and answered her companion's questions and remarks vaguely, for her thoughts were chiefly with the mysterious stranger who had helped her before, when she most needed a friend.

She looked up from her musing, and there he was; but to her disappointment, not alone. He stood in a doorway in conversation with a young girl whom he was addressing earnestly, and, as it seemed, familiarly. Isyl needed only a glance as she passed to scrutinise her from head to foot. The girl was facing her. She had a swarthy, handsome countenance, with coal black hair. She was dressed in a red flannelette shirt-waist, and Isyl did not approve of her. Tom did not see the two as they passed.

As she was driven home to the Willows, Isyl saw the couple again. They were passing the Post Office, and this time they were side by side in a buggy; Tom was driving furiously up Market Street toward the Alameda. It was all the Queen could do to keep back her tears and talk composedly.

Meanwhile, the Knights, booted and spurred, had set out, a cavalcade of some half dozen riders, and pelted down First Street with small regard for the comfort of pedestrians. They clattered under

the tall electric light tower at a Spanish trot, singing and jesting, and, once out of the crowd, settled into a lope that brought them, in three-quarters of an hour, to within sight of Golcher's.

The party was cantering up to the road-house when they suddenly heard a woman's voice screaming. They drew rein and called to each other in surprise—the adventure was becoming more serious than they had expected. The Grand Commander spurred forward like a hero, and the rest followed him. Pulling up at the watering-trough they threw themselves from their saddles. By this time the screams had stopped, and the silence alarmed them more than the shrieks had done.

The front door was locked, the windows were fastened. They went round to the back of the house, and all was closed securely. The place seemed deserted except for a bull-dog chained and growling savagely in the yard. The Knights held a consultation on the front porch, and, while one drew a revolver, the Grand Commander put his foot through a pane of glass, lifted the sash and climbed in. The rest followed him. They trod lightly, as if afraid of the sound of their own footfalls, and spoke in whispers. The room was empty,

so was the little white dining-room, so was the kitchen.

As they were about to investigate the upper story, the Grand Commander dashed over to a corner of the room and picked up a heavy wrap. It was a black velvet cape, lined with ermine.

"That's Norine Almeric's cape!" he cried. "She was to have worn it at the coronation—I know it, because it was rented from Cohen's costume place for fifty dollars, with the crown and jewels. She must be here in the house!"

At that moment a startling shriek came from the room directly over their heads. Then all was still again.

The Grand Commander trembled, hesitating, but a Worshipful Scribe, he with the revolver, took the lead. "Come on, boys," he called, "let's look upstairs."

They followed him up to a landing where were three closed doors. Two rooms were found to be empty; the third door was locked. The Grand Commander peeped through the keyhole, but could see nothing. "Who's in there?" he cried.

"Oh, for God's sake let me out," a woman answered.

"Who are you?" asked the Grand Commander.

"Let me out, can't you? I'm locked in!" she screamed.

Two of the Knights threw themselves at the door with violence, the bolt broke free, and they fell into the room. There, standing by the window, a handkerchief to her mouth, was a handsome young woman of swarthy complexion, dressed in a red flannelette shirt-waist.

"Oh, thank you, so much!" she exclaimed. "I was afraid I'd never get out!"

"How did you get in? That's the question," said the Grand Commander, sternly. He was disappointed. So were the Knights. "How in thunder do you happen to be locked into a room in a deserted house, that's what I'd like to know, and who are you, anyway?" All the pedagogue in him was manifest in his tone.

"My name," said the girl in the red waist, "is Dolores del Robles. But how I happened to be here, locked in this room—that is a long story."

"Before you tell that, then, miss, tell me—have you seen Miss Almeric here in this house?"

"A tall young lady, with light hair, dressed in a beautiful white dress?"

"Yes, that's Norine," they exclaimed. "Where is she?"

"Ah, I do not know. She was in this room. She went away. It is a part of the story!"

"Then tell it, for Heaven's sake!" cried the Grand Commander. "Come down-stairs and we'll light up, first, though."

They went down, but the girl, asking to be excused while she arranged her hair, watched them descend. As soon as they were out of sight, she ran quickly into one of the other rooms whose windows opened to the East, overlooking the back of the house. She softly raised the sash, and looked out. Beside the stable a buckboard was standing. It held two persons, a tall girl and a man. "Keep them for half an hour, if you can!" he called, just loud enough for her to hear. The girl in the flannelette waist waved her handkerchief, as the man took the reins and drove hastily away.

Señorita Dolores then descended the stairs and found the knights impatiently awaiting her. They arose, offered her a chair and she began

The Distressed Damsel's Story

A DISCIPLE OF CERVANTES

Or, Love Insidious

THE Ulistac Rancho is all that is left of the Cañada de Santa Teresa, a seven-league grant in the Santa Clara Valley, and Señor Rodriguez and his daughter Ynez are all that is left of the Ulistac family, who received their land directly from King Carlos IV. of Spain, in recognition of distinguished services to the crown. The Santa Teresa Rancho was a small kingdom, in early days, and the Ulistacs were the proudest and richest family in Alta California. God knows they are proud enough now, but their land has been stolen from them, league by league, ever since the Gringo came. There are now sixteen hundred acres of the most fertile land in the county, though there are but two Ulistacs left to share it.

The old Señor is a Spanish gentleman of the old school, fiery, astute, and polished. He is a quaint talker, reading much in the old books he keeps in his hacienda. He is especially fond of Cervantes, whose words he is always quoting.

When his son died, the old Señor made a vow, and, Jesu! he has had hard work enough keeping it! He swore to the Virgin at the old Mission San Jose that his ranch should never be cut up, and that his daughter should never inherit it until he had found a husband who would promise to keep the ranch whole. Now it was not easy to find a fitting son-in-law, for, besides his vow, the Señor had many other things to be satisfied upon.

Now the fame of the Ulistac Rancho and the beauty of the Señorita Ynez has long been spread over California, for it is the fattest pig for which the first knife is whetted. Every young Spaniard in the country has tried for the ranch and the señorita, for it is not often that one can get two such fortunes for the asking. Ever since Ynez came home from the convent in Andalusia, suitors for her hand have been coming to see the old Señor. They have come from San Luis Rey and Sonoma, and the Soquel, from Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, and even from San Diego—and every one of them has gone home again with his cigarette out, as we say. No one could please the Señor. He would keep each of them three days, for the Ulistacs are hospitable even for Spaniards,

and in one way or another the old man would test the young señors and find them never so shrewd as he, nor ever fit to be the husband of Señorita Ynez. For the Señor knows men as priests know the holy mass. He is a keen judge of human nature, and he is never mistaken—so he thinks! But he was fooled once, and that is why I, Dolores, second cousin of the Señorita Ynez, am here, telling you this story.

Although my mother was an Ulistac, my father was of meaner blood, and so it is, that while I live at the hacienda and am the friend and confidante of the Señorita Ynez, I am more than half servant, too, and am not really taken into the family, which is a sore trial to me. So I was the first one to see the Señor Pedro del Mar, when, last month, he drove up into our yard and called to me to tie up his pinto mare. How I have hated him, ever since!

The Señor del Mar was a saucy youth with a few hairs of moustache and an impertinent smile as if he were the owner of the mountains and the sky and sea and moon itself. Jesu! one would have thought that it was San Jose himself come down from Heaven to be worshipped! Before I had

time to box his ears for his freedom with my chin, the Señor came out of the patio.

"Buenos dios!" said the stranger, and he swept a bow in the old style. "Señor, you have a very pretty little rancho. It suits me perfectly and it is all that has been said of it, so I am come to marry your daughter. And may God grant that she be as pretty as the ranch, though as for that, I doubt it!"

"My humble rancho and all upon it are yours," said the old Señor in turn, "and may I never see another such audacious señor without having a gun in my hand, or a dog to set on him. Whom have I the honour of addressing, if it pleases your impertinence?"

"I am the Señor Manuel del Mar de Los Prietos y Bolbones," he said, "and it behooves us to get acquainted, since we are to live the rest of our lives together peacefully under your fig-trees here. How many head of cattle do you run?"

I momentarily expected the old Señor would draw a knife, but instead there was a twinkle in his eye and he answered the question as politely as if the priest had asked it.

"Four hundred head of the best stock," he said, "and they are of course yours, if you will deign to

accept them, but as for being my son-in-law, I remember the Master says 'every man is the son of his own works,' and you have done little yet save insult me, to deserve the title. However, since you deign to visit me, come into the patio and we will talk together."

As the two went in, the Señor gave me a word to prepare a soup he knew of, for this was one of the ways he tested the wits of the suitors. So I went into the kitchen and made ready the dinner.

The Señor bowed the young man in as if he were welcoming a Grandee, and when they sat down to the table I watched to see how the youth would act. For you must know the soup was hot with fire and hotter still with *chili caliente*, so that it would burn one's mouth like a red coal, and many a young man had not stood the test with comfort.

Señor del Mar took one spoonful of soup, and then jumped up and ran to the door as if the Fiend were after him, and then came back in a rage.

"Caramba! Santa Maria de los Centos Angeles!" he cried. "Where is your pump, señor, for the pity of the damned in Hell! Is that the way you entertain a señor who has come five hundred

miles to honour you? Keep the rest of that infernal mess to light your fires with, or to scald your pigs! Do you think I want to drink burning brimstone before my time?"

The old Señor laughed as I have never seen him laugh before. "Ah, he is no fool, this youngster," he chuckled to himself.

And he opened a bottle from a corner of the cellar I had never seen used before.

When they had finished dinner the young man said, "Suppose you allow the Señorita the pleasure of looking upon her future husband, Señor. I confess I would like to see if she is pretty enough for me to wed."

"A little in one's own pocket is better than much in another's," quoted the Señor, "and you have not yet won my daughter. But what a man doesn't ask for, he doesn't get. The Señorita is a bit coy, and the meeting will wait till I am through with you. Suppose we ride over the ranch together this afternoon."

"It is well," the youth said, "for I was thinking of a few improvements that should be made."

So, as they went outside the Señor said to me, "Tell Pedro to saddle Angel and Diablo quickly!"

When the horses were brought up, the Señor's thoroughbred was given to him, but to Señor del Mar, Pedro led a galled, spavined, blind broncho who held his ears back and his head low. Also, he stumbled badly. When the young Señor saw the sorry nag that was given him, while his host had a fine horse to ride, he walked back into the patio and lay down in a hammock.

"Jesu! but it is hot to-day!" he yawned. "I think we had better wait till it is cooler, Señor, and smoke a few cigarettes in the shade."

The old Señor smiled and he rubbed his hands gleefully, for many a man, out of politeness, and for the sake of winning Ynez, had been glad to ride the galled jade.

"You can see farther into a millstone than some," he said to Señor del Mar, "yet you may be more knave than fool. Also fear is sharp-sighted and I would be sure that you are a man as lusty and green as I, in my old age. The Ulistacs have always been known for their endurance and strength, and so must be any who marry with us. My uncle won my grandfather's consent that he should wed my aunt Maria del Pilar, by taming a broncho when his own shoulder was broken. When I was at school in

Spain I made the pilgrimage to Valladolid with peas in my shoes. It is a good test, and a hard one. So, suppose we see if we can walk from here to the corral thus." And he brought out a handful of dried peas.

"'Go easy, go far,' says your own Master Cervantes," replied Señor del Mar. "If you wish to walk with peas in your shoes for your own sins, why, you do the walking and I'll do the praying. I have heard that the prayer of one wise man is worth the entreaty of fifty fools!"

The old Señor grasped his hand, laughing, and he said, "Well said, O my son-in-law, and now we will drink another bottle and send for the Señorita."

When I went up to call the Señorita Ynez, you may imagine I was in a blaze at the impertinence of the young del Mar, and when she asked me of him I put a flea in her ear.

"The Señor has been gracious enough to accept your hand," I said, "though indeed it seems that you are only thrown into the scales to make up for the land's scantiness since the last fifty varas was got by the Railroad. I never saw such a braggart out of a book, and he is now telling your father of

the beauties of San Juan Capistrano, all of whom are, it seems, madly in love with him! He doubts if you can be as beautiful, Señorita, so you had better put some paint on your cheeks!"

Jesu! but she was angry, and I feared I had gone too far with my words. But she said:

"I will show him if I am, and without paint, either, and I will also show him other things, Santa Ysabel helping me!"

So she went down.

"Ynez," said the old man, "this is Señor Manuel del Mar de los Prietos y Bolbones, your future husband. Salute your bride, my son-in-law!"

Señorita Ynez went red as fire as she said,

"One moment, Señor. The property first, the wife afterward. Have you kissed the deeds of the Santa Teresa Grant?"

"Jesu, your daughter is a spitfire, but she is pretty," said the young man. "It will be no trouble to kiss her!"

"It will be a good deal of trouble, by the Holy Virgin!" Ynez exclaimed. "You had better finish your wine, for the kiss will wait. As for me, I shall not!" and she ran upstairs and cried and stamped her feet till the adobe fell from the walls.

"The fewer the kisses the tighter the knot," said the old man, trying to smooth things over, for now he was bound that the Señor del Mar should be his son-in-law. So they sat and drank our red wine, talking over the rancho and how it would never be cut up into lots as the Gringo wished. Twice they sent for more bottles, and when I saw that they were finished with the business and were talking about Ynez, I listened in the shadow near the window.

"May the Saints forgive me, but women are like pigs," the old man was saying. "Drive them away from the gate if you want them to go through it. Ah, Señor, I know women! I have been young, too, in my time!"

The Señor del Mar laughed loudly and long, for our Muscatel is a heady wine, and he had been drinking freely of the bottle. "Yes, yes," he said, "I know that, Señor. There was a woman at Los Pulchas——"

"Ynez says she will not accept you," the old man went on, "but 'yes' is as short a word as 'no.' If we are to lasso the girl, let us grease our riata with a little thought. You are a fine fellow and have a head on your shoulders. Bueno. You open

the gate and I will drive her harshly away from it. Caramba! She'll run through in a minute. Do you understand, or must I crack the nut to show you the kernel?"

"It is as plain as the nose on your face, as Cervantes himself says," said the young man.

"Well then, agreed. You insult me. I drive you away. You come back to court the girl, I fire upon you. I forbid her to leave, therefore she flies with you. Behold, the pig is through the fence!" And they both laughed uproariously to think how clever they were.

I went up and told the Señorita, and together we planned how to make fools of the two men who knew women—especially one at Los Pulchas, for I did not forget to repeat that.

The next day as the two men sat outside, the old Señor asked the young man for a fire for his cigarette, and Señor del Mar handed his own cigarette, lighted end first, which, you know, is not according to Spanish etiquette, and a great insult.

Jesu! but there was a scene like a theatre while we watched.

"Señor," said Señor Ulistac, "you have criticised my house, my ranch, my cattle and my

daughter, but I will not stand a boor who does not know how to pass a cigarette. Men have been killed for less than this, in my time, and I give you four minutes to leave this place before I fire on you!"

Señor del Mar arose, and when his horse was brought he rode away, not without some words to show how brave he was. Faugh! as if he could fool us!

"I shall still consider myself the lover of the radiant Señorita Ynez!" he cried, as he left, and he waved his hat to her as if he were already married. She stared at him, acting her part, too, as well as he.

The old Señor forbade Ynez to leave the place, and she pretended to be greatly angry at it. That night she heard a sound at her window, and when she opened it, there was Señor del Mar ready to make love to her. When she had talked to him through the blind for a few minutes, the old Señor discovered them, and ran out and began to shoot his gun, and the young man fled away. So, for several nights he came, and the Señorita wept to herself when her father was looking. He swore at her and accused her of loving Señor del Mar,

and said if she once saw him she would be put in a convent.

At last the comedy reached a crisis, and a note was brought to the Señorita, asking her to elope with the young del Mar. You should have seen her face when she read it! But the time had come for what we had planned.

She sent back a note, therefore, saying that, as she was not allowed to leave the house, she would meet him, disguised in my clothes, for I, of course, was allowed full liberty to go and come. He was to meet her at the oaks near the county road, being ready with a waggon.

The elopement was planned for last night, and so, at nine o'clock, after the house was still, I threw on a cloak, and ran all the way down to the road, for I was frightened. It was dark, and I feared lest the old Señor would be in pursuit, as part of the game. If he discovered that it was not his daughter who was running away, I knew he would be terribly enraged. As for the young Señor, I trusted that I could deceive him, as he did not know Señorita Ynez very well, having had but little talk with her.

Señor del Mar was waiting in the waggon, and

when I reached the place he jumped down, helped me up on the seat, and drove off. Just then we heard a pistol-shot behind us, and we knew that Señor Ulistac was following us, as a part of the joke.

Señor del Mar whipped his horses, and we raced at a terrible speed, so fast that he had no time to speak much to me, or discover that I was not Ynez. The old Señor followed for many miles, shooting occasionally. How we laughed at him, each of us for a different reason!

Finally, there was no shooting, and Señor del Mar slowed down his horse, and said,

"Now, Señorita Ynez, I will have that kiss I have been so long waiting for!"

Then I threw off my hood, and I said, calmly, "You have talked of driving pigs, Señor, but, as Cervantes says, this time you have the wrong sow by the ear! As for the kiss, you may get it of the woman at Los Pulchas, if you need it!"

Then I jumped from the waggon and ran away in the dark, leaving him so frightfully angry that I dared not listen to him. I walked two or three miles till I came to this house.

So much for the Señorita Ynez, whom I hope to

see to-morrow—now for, what was her name?—Miss Almeric.

Well, I came to this house, and the windows were lighted, and I heard men singing loudly, so I passed round to the back, thinking I might find a woman by the kitchen door. While I was in the yard I saw an upper window opened and a woman looked out. She called down to me, softly.

"I am locked in here," she said, "and I cannot get out! Do you think you can help me? I will pay you."

Looking about the yard I saw a ladder, and after hard work I succeeded in standing it against the wall of the house. Then I climbed up, and entered the window.

The lady was in a white satin dress, quite beautiful, and she said, softly, "Listen! If you will stay here in my place, so as to give me a chance to escape unnoticed, I will pay you well. Just sit down here, and be sure you cry rather loudly, occasionally, so that the men below will know there is still someone here."

I was not afraid of them, so I consented. She went down the ladder, and removed it, and then

went away into the dark. I stayed here all night alone, and early in the morning the company of men left and locked the house, after saying through the keyhole—" Don't be afraid, someone will surely let you out soon ! " So I waited, tired and hungry, till now. It is all very strange. I do not understand it ! Do you ?

VII

THE BANQUET

¶ HOW *the Chamberlain conspired to see the Queen's ring privily, and enticed her into captivity. How she was succoured by Sir Tomas the Scalawag, and held in hostage: The Tale of Love Recusant.*

KIT WILKINSON, the Chamberlain of the Fiesta court, was, in private life, a lawyer and politician. His entire patronage depended upon his association with Bob Almeric, whose creature he was. And so, when the county boss came to him at seven o'clock that evening with a scowl on his face, the Chamberlain, dress-

ing for the court banquet, knew that something serious was the matter.

They had talked before, that day, on the subject of Norine's disappearance, but her continued absence had made Almeric's anxiety greater every minute. So far, he had spoken of it to no one except Kit Wilkinson and Isyl, hoping that she might return at any minute. But by this afternoon the rumour had grown that Norine was not at home. Several persons had seen her at the window of the "Star" Hotel, and gossip was busy. The boss had succeeded in mystifying the newspaper men, but the thing was worrying him. He was anxious and furious at once.

"Now see here, Wilkinson," he said to the Chamberlain, "do you think I like this? Isn't it enough for her to go back on the 'Drag' without making me worry whether she's safe or not, away all night like this? How'll it look in the newspapers?"

"Oh, Norine's all right, I guess. It's only one of her larks," said the Chamberlain, in a conciliatory tone.

"Yes, you'd think so, if you saw what I saw, to-day," said Bob Almeric. "You know that Shea

girl; well, I'm damned if she ain't wearing Norine's sapphire ring! What does that look like, hey?"

"Norine's ring!"

"It looked mighty like it, when I saw it on her finger, this afternoon, and when she wouldn't let me see it, I was sure."

"Well, what can we do about it? I don't see how we can force her to show it!"

"I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to put on the screws—and to-night, too!"

"I'd make sure about the ring before I did that."

"That's exactly what I have got to have done. And you're going to do it," said the boss.

"Me?"

"You," said the boss, with a gesture peculiarly his own; "you find out about it to-night, see?"

The Chamberlain saw, and what he saw was not pleasant to contemplate. He would lose his influence with the "Drag" if he refused.

"It's a hard job," he said.

"You've done harder ones, Wilkinson. Remember,—sapphire with red gold setting, and Norine's name. It's your business to get a look at the inside. And after you've made sure of it, this is what you're to do."

The instructions that followed put a frown between the Chamberlain's eyes, but before Bob Almeric left, his henchman had bowed to the rod of power, as the boss's henchmen always did. He promised to obey, even to the letter. Under the circumstances, he looked forward to the banquet with little pleasure. Only the fact that he had been able to place beside himself at the table one of his favourite Maids-of-Honour reconciled him to the prospect.

When the Chamberlain reached the Hotel Vendome, court and guests were assembled in the waiting-room. The Queen had not yet arrived. All were chatting in the lively manner of people who have gone together through a common excitement. This was the only number on the Carnival programme where the court was not on show for the public, and it promised to be a merry evening.

The Queen came; the Chamberlain, after arranging the order of precedence, offered her his arm; the band struck up a march, and the dinner was on.

The disagreeable encounter with Bob Almeric faded from Isyl's mind; so, for the first time in their twenty-four hour long acquaintance, did Tom

Parrish. Even the mystery of Norine's disappearance did not disturb her, although the Knights, returning from their unsuccessful quest, had reported the sensational episode at Golcher's roadhouse.

For the court's good-humour was contagious. At the head of the table, her Lord Chamberlain beside her, she felt the coldness of her courtiers melt into good-will. It was almost as if she were really reigning over her play kingdom, though it belonged to another. Now and again the thought of Tom Parrish did indeed cross her mind, and with it came the disagreeable recollection of a coarse-looking girl, in a red flannelette waist. She thought, too, of the lies she had told for the sake of this mysterious stranger. When this came she plunged back into the gaiety of the scene more desperately than ever, by way of proving that she did not care.

Gradually she became aware that the Chamberlain was paying her more attention than usual. Before, he had virtually ignored her, except when he had to address her in an official capacity, but to-night, as the dinner progressed, he seemed to go out of his way to interest and amuse her. Although he divided his attentions with tact, the girl

on his other hand seemed to notice an unwonted devotion to Isyl, also, and struck up a lively flirtation with her next-door neighbour.

The dinner was growing merrier. They toasted the Queen, the ill and deposed Norine, and one and another of the court functionaries. The enthusiasm spread to other tables; talk and laughter drowned the music of the orchestra.

The Chamberlain opened another story on the Queen, and the Prime Minister, on her left, dropped out of the conversation. Then the Chamberlain nerved himself for the trial.

"Do you know anything about palmistry?" he began, in the time-honoured way.

"No, only a few of the lines. Can you tell my fortune? Do!" said Isyl.

He took the proffered hand and looked at it wisely.

"I can't read your palm unless you take off your rings," he said.

"What nonsense!" said Isyl. "Of course you can! I never heard of that before!"

"It isn't professional to allow anything to be carried on the fingers during a reading. I'm strictly scientific, and if you really want to know the truth,

you must take off your rings. You see, for one thing, I can't tell the shape of the fingers or the spaces between, to know whether you're extravagant or not."

Isyl drew off two rings, and then came to the sapphire. It was too large for the finger on which it had been placed by Tom Parrish, and she had put the others over it for guards. When she came to it, then, she stopped.

"I can't take this off!" she said, with decision.

"You must!" said the Chamberlain.

"Indeed, I won't. You can see if I move it up to the first joint, so!"

"Well, I'll try," he said, seeing she was determined. He began a rigamarole, inventing as he talked. He held the ring between his thumb and finger, turning it slightly as he spoke. It fitted so loosely that he caught sight of a word engraved inside. Then he bent more closely, pretending to examine some of the fine markings that diverged from the heart-line.

"You are in love," he said, "don't deny it! But you have had several minor affairs before. This is serious. Yes, you'll marry—only once, though. Now bend your fingers up a little.

Heavens, what luck! You'll be engaged very soon!"

He had seen what he wanted, for, fingering her hand, the name "Norine" was for a moment visible as the light caught the inside of the ring.

The dinner was followed by a general reception, during which the Queen's mind was kept too busy remembering names and faces for any connected train of thought. One thing, however, occurred to draw it back to the problem of Norine and Tom Parrish.

A throng of people was entering the room where she stood, being presented and passing on to the refreshment rooms. It was a heterogeneous collection—persons of all sorts—arrayed in every kind of costume from evening dress to negligé or outing garb. They were brought up in pairs by the Chamberlain, made inane remarks, and went on. The Queen and her Maids-of-Honour stood at one side, welcoming their friends, bowing, shaking hands, smiling. It was in a rapid glance, shot between an approaching and departing couple, that Isyl saw the Grand Commander on the opposite side of the room.

He bore on his arm a girl of some nineteen

years, rather handsome, with a swarthy complexion and black hair. She was dressed, with a fine disregard for the formality of a court presentation, in a red flannelette shirt-waist. The Grand Commander bent over her in absorbed attention. Indeed, so conspicuously did he adore his partner that it was evident he wished to be noticed by Isyl. The Queen smiled; the fact that this girl was with the Grand Commander and not with Tom was pleasant. The pair did not approach to be presented, but, as soon as he noticed that he was observed, the Commander escorted his inamorata away.

At about ten o'clock, after the tide of visitors had ceased to flow, the Chamberlain approached the Queen and said,

"Any time you care to leave, Miss Shea, I can take you home. I have a carriage ready whenever you say to go."

"I think I'll leave now, then," Isyl said, in relief, longing to get away from the crush, the odour and the noise. A few minutes after she descended the stairs to the door. Here was a carriage waiting, and the Chamberlain helped her in. After speaking a few words to the driver in a low voice, he

entered the carriage himself, and sat down beside her, starting an animated conversation.

She had begun to feel herself of consequence, an important part of the Fiesta, and was delighting in the loyalty and homage of her chief adviser, when, glancing out of the window, Isyl noticed that they had passed the street where they should have turned off, to go to the Willows, and were still driving south. She interrupted the Chamberlain in the amusing story he was telling, and called his attention to their route. He answered, with an attempt at carelessness, that he was forced to see the Prime Minister for a moment in regard to the exercises next day. Isyl thought it a bit cavalier to take her out of her way in this manner, but, supposing that she also was to be consulted as to the programme, said no more until they passed the Post Office.

"Where are we going?" she demanded, now suspicious for the first time.

"Why, he's waiting for me at the City Hall." The Chamberlain's voice did not sound quite natural.

Isyl was now really alarmed. "I'd rather not go," she said; "please take me home first. Tell the driver to turn round, Mr. Wilkinson."

He said nothing, and the carriage kept on its way.

"What do you mean by this?" Isyl demanded angrily.

The Chamberlain kept silence.

Isyl now attempted to open the carriage-door, not daring to guess what his intentions might be. But she immediately realised that it would be impossible for her to jump out with safety in the train she was wearing. Instead, she pulled down the window to scream. A man in an Inverness cape was standing under a lamppost, lighting a cigar. As she was swept past, the flare of his match illuminated his face and red hair, and Isyl saw that it was Tom Parrish.

"Tom! Tom!" she cried to him.

The driver pulled up his horse, but the Chamberlain put his head out of the other window and called for him to drive on. Isyl looked back, and saw Tom start into a run behind the carriage. The Chamberlain touched her arm.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Shea, but I'll have to ask you to keep still."

"How dare you!" she cried. "Stop this carriage immediately, and let me get out."

"I'm very sorry to have to appear so ungentlemanly, Miss Shea, but there's no use in deceiving you any further. The fact is, I have to take you to the office of the Chief of Police. It will only be necessary for you to answer a few questions. You needn't worry about it. It's a mere formality I assure you!"

"What do you mean—the police?" Isyl asked, frightened at the ominous sound of the word. "What do they want of me?"

"It's about Miss Almeric. Of course you can easily explain that satisfactorily. I didn't want to cause a scene, so I took the liberty of bringing you here this way. You must forgive me, for I had to obey orders."

Isyl made no reply, as it was useless to assert her innocence then. She alighted with him at the front entrance to the City Hall and went up the steps. Just before they entered she looked back, but Tom was nowhere in sight. With more anger at the trick that had been played on her than dread of the approaching ordeal, she accompanied her escort into the office of the Chief of Police.

The Chief, in uniform, was sitting at his desk,

talking with Bob Almeric. The two men arose and greeted Isyl with formal politeness. Isyl was pale, but aroused in every fibre at the sight of the boss who had so insultingly accused her.

"I hope you'll forgive our method of getting you here, Miss Shea," said the Chief, "but we thought you'd prefer to have this matter kept quiet, and it will take only a few moments for you to clear it up. Now if you'll just tell us all you know about Miss Almeric's leaving the Pavilion last night, and where she is now, you can be driven home immediately, and nothing will be said about this."

"I have told Mr. Almeric all I know already, and I have nothing further to say," Isyl answered proudly.

The Chief drew up a chair and said, kindly, "Miss Shea, you don't seem to realise that this is a rather serious matter. Miss Almeric has been missing since last night, and her father is very much concerned about it. You were the last one seen with her, and naturally we have to question you. You may know where she is, and you may not, but would you mind telling how you happen to be wearing her ring?"

"What makes you think it is her ring?" Isyl asked.

"It has her name engraved inside, for one thing," the Chamberlain volunteered.

"Oh, that's why you talked palmistry, was it? But I didn't know it had Norine's name in it before." Isyl partly removed it, now, and looked for herself. Not having taken it off before since she received it, she had not noticed the name inside. To Bob Almeric, however, who knew nothing of this, it seemed like the height of impertinence.

"Are you trying to make me believe you didn't know what was inside that ring?" he said, sneeringly.

"You may believe it or not," she answered.

"Do you mind saying where you got it?" the Chief asked.

"I decline to tell," Isyl said.

The boss looked at the Chief; the Chief looked at the floor, uncertain what step to take next. At that moment Tom Parrish, in evening dress and Inverness, walked into the room.

"Well, sir, what do *you* want?" said the Chief.

Without answering, Tom walked up to Isyl,

saying jauntily, "Well, Your Majesty, are you needing a champion to defend you? Which one of these three shall I kill first—the dragon, the magician or the craven knight who stole you?"

In a moment Isyl's courage returned. She had absolute confidence in his power to master any situation. So she smiled at last, and held up the sapphire.

"These gentlemen are trying to make me tell where I got this ring," she said.

"And you wouldn't answer?"

"Of course not. How could I?"

"Well, then, it's largely up to little Tommy to put on the black cap and noose." He bowed, sweeping an opera hat with a bombastic gesture. "Gentlemen, allow me to introduce to you the wonder of the criminal world, T. Parrish, Esquire, Author and Illustrator of the Great Sapphire Ring Robbery, the Mystery of the Twentieth Century. I done it. Now do your worst!" And he struck an attitude which succeeded in drawing a grin from the Chief of Police.

"You're a swell gonoff, I don't think!" he said. "You are Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman, I suppose! Well, if you really pinched this ring, I'll

send for the handcuffs. If it's a joke, you'd better wake up and get onto yourself, or we'll have a scandal in high society."

"I cannot tell a lie, I took the ring," Tom asserted.

"Where did you get it?"

"Ah, I pass. But I'm glad you are intelligent enough to argue from effect to cause."

"Do you know where my daughter is?" was the next question.

"I might dare to guess," was the answer.

"That's about enough of this foolishness," the Chief interrupted. "You tell what you know, or I'll have to hold you."

"It strikes me you're rather short on evidence for that. You'll invite a suit for false imprisonment, if you do. We don't allow a man to incriminate himself where I come from. As one professional to another, I wouldn't advise it, really."

"See here, young fellow, talk sense a minute. You have got Miss Shea into a scrape. It's up to you to square it. It's no joke; she's found in possession of stolen property."

"Stolen?" said Tom. "I didn't catch that. Who says it's stolen?"

"You did yourself."

"Pardon me, I said nothing like that. It's too ugly a word. I said I took it. If I should give you a short arm jab on the chin, would you say you stole it?"

"Well, what do you propose to do about this, then?"

"I'll tell you. If you'll whistle off your blood-hounds, and keep your paws off me, I'll promise to bring a note back from Miss Almeric within an hour by the clock. Unfortunately this is not my secret, and that's the best I can do, even for the Queen of the Fiesta. Miss Norine is of age, though I say it as shouldn't, and she has a right to take a vacation if she wishes, I suppose. Your Majesty, do you mind waiting while I remove this slight blot on the 'scutcheon?"

Isyl nodded, and the others, cajoled in spite of themselves by his airiness, allowed him to depart. Indeed they all welcomed the hope that he might, as he promised, relieve their curiosity, and were content to wait. The men, with the Queen's gracious permission, lit cigars and began to talk.

They had sat thus, and gossiped of nothings for some minutes when the Chief of Police remarked,

"I wonder if I ought to have had that chap followed? Of course there's no evidence against him, and he looked all right to me."

"Funny how we all fell down in front of his bluff," said Bob Almeric. "He came out to interview me the night that Norine left. Said he wanted to know if she was at home. Lord, I had to take a stick to get rid of him. He's got a nerve."

"He had you all hypnotised, that's what's the matter," the Chamberlain offered,—"that's the kind of a fellow he is!"

"I wonder if he will come back in an hour. How are you betting, Mr. Almeric?" the Chief asked.

"I'll back him for a hundred dollars, easy," said the boss. "He's the kind that delivers the goods, or I'm no judge of men. Say, Jack, I'll bet I could use that boy! I need fellows like that in my business." Then, looking up at Isyl and fearing that she might have some understanding with Tom, he changed the subject.

The Chief, now thinking it necessary to entertain his involuntary visitor, began to show her his pictures of rogues and criminals. Isyl shuddered at the display until he came to what he called his

"civil section," and then became more interested. Presently she came to a photograph of three Chinese in long, ceremonial jackets and red-button caps, surrounding a keen-faced white man, dressed in the fashion of ten years ago.

"That's Frank Powell and the Chinks that married him off, his matrimonial bureau, we used to call them. It's a pretty good yarn, that—— want to hear about it?"

"If there are no murders in it," said Isyl.

"Only six," laughed the Chief. "But they were all Chinamen, and don't count. They don't have anything much to do with the story, anyway."

"Then you may tell it," said Isyl.

The boss and the Chamberlain tilted back in their armchairs and the Chief began:

The Chief of Police's Story

THE CHINESE BRIDE

Or, Love Recusant

THE more you know about the Chinese, the more you don't. There was this fellow Frank Powell. He had the name of knowing them and getting on with them better than any other man in California, and he got into trouble

because he thought he knew a little more than he did. It was this way.

Frank was attorney for the Chinese Six Companies. His best client among them was the Hip Suey Tong, the richest and swellest Chinese society here in San Jose or in San Francisco. They were principally merchants and bankers and gambling-house keepers. Had three millionaires amongst them, and precious few that couldn't raise five thousand dollars bail-money any day of the week.

Now, the Hip Sueys have an idol that is supposed to be the luckiest thing this side of Canton. It is as white as a ghost, all but the face and breast, which are dripping blood; and it holds a mandarin fan that money won't buy. Any gambler in Chinatown would give his father's soul and his mother's to get hold of the joss, or even the fan of the joss. Every single Chink of them believes that if he could steal it he would be able to beat any fan-tan game, win in any lottery, or get any woman. That's why the Hip Sueys keep the joss locked up in a fire-proof vault, except at their big Festival of the Dead, which comes off every three years. Then they bring it up into the joss-house,

but then they don't dare trust any Chinamen to guard it. They get two white men to stand by it with guns and clubs.

The hatchet-men have made all sorts of attempts at one time or another to steal the joss, but no one ever came anywhere near doing it till Ng Poo decided to take a hand. Ng Poo was the President of the Mok Sing Tong of highbinders, and he was about the toughest citizen that ever used chopsticks. His Tong scraped together two thousand dollars by blackmail, and Ng Poo used it to bribe the two white watchmen. They agreed to play into his hands on the first night of the Feast of the Dead.

The Hip Sueys were doing the thing in style, that year. They were keeping open house; the alley was filled with bands of music and decorated with paper flowers and colored electric lights; priests and chanters on the ground floor singing night and day, firecrackers and a free dinner for all comers. Half Chinatown was there in Spofford Alley, besides dozens and hundreds of white visitors.

So, following his plan, Ng Poo waited until the club-rooms and the stairs were packed, and then

emptied his gun at the entrance to create a panic, and draw off attention from what was going on in the joss-room. So far it worked all right. The Chinese and tourists rushed up and rushed back and then jammed in a wedge on the stairs.

Frank Powell happened to be on the second floor landing with some ladies, showing them the sights. In a flash he guessed what was up. He piled over a dozen Chinks, threw open the window and climbed out on the fire-escape. There, at a window above, was Tom Bourke, one of the white watchmen, passing the big white joss down to a highbinder who was standing on the very platform with Frank. Just as it fell into the man's arms, Frank grabbed him by the pigtail, yanked him back, grabbed the joss and sat on it till help came. If Frank had been a Chinaman, they would have stuck him like a pig; but they know better than to touch a white man. Every mother's son of them knows that it would be all up with Chinatown if they ever did; for people would tear the place out by the roots.

When they had the idol locked tight in the vault again, the Hip Sueys arranged for Ng Poo's disappearance by the hatchet-route. Then, of

course, the Mok Sings came back at them, and there was a big feud on. There was some characteristic Chinese repartee, and when the Six Companies got in and stopped the fight, the score stood at three dead on each side, and honours easy.

The Hip Sueys had an all-day and all-night banquet to celebrate, and Frank Powell was guest of honour at the biggest feast he ever went up against. Consul-General Bee, who was there, managed to get himself telegraphed for after eight hours, but Frank had to stand for it, chop suey, birds' nests, boiled bamboo, duck-eggs, seaweed soup, rice brandy and all. It was something fierce. The everlasting gongs, squeaky fiddles and tomtoms were making him so sleepy he had to smoke cigarettes to keep himself awake, when the President of the Tong got up and made a speech of gratitude, flowery hot air and endless friendship. Then he presented Frank Powell with a souvenir of the evening.

It was a carved sandal-wood egg as big as a foot-ball. Frank opened it to find another inside, and he kept opening eggs and eggs till he'd taken off twelve layers and came to the

real chicken. It was a check for three thousand dollars, signed by the Treasurer of the Hip Suey Tong.

Now this was a pretty neat little gift, but Frank's stand-in with the Chinese was worth a good deal more to him than that. Besides, he didn't exactly like to take money that way. He saw the chance for a grand-stand play. So he said to the interpreter:

"Tell the Tong that I saved the great white joss for friendship alone, and his bloody face will bring me good luck and honourable success. I am paid enough by the friendship of the honourable Tong, and no money shall pass between us for this trifling service!"

The Chinks jabbered awhile, seeming to be impressed, and finally the President came over to Frank and said:

"All-light, Flank, you no like-em take money, Tong catch-em heap nice plesent pletty soon. You like-em one nice China lady wife for plesent?"

Frank laughed, and then said,

"Much obliged, Li Hong Fook, but you know I have a wife already."

"Tha's all-light," says Hong Fook. "Maybe Melican man have two wifes sometime, wha's-a-malla that?"

"Oh, sometimes they play they have two wives, but it's against the law, sure!"

Now there never was a Chink who had the least respect for American law; it's only made to beat; and there never was one who didn't have the biggest respect in the world for a lawyer, because he can always side-step the courts of the "white devils." It never struck them that Frank Powell, who had fooled justice for them a hundred times, would have any trouble getting round a law for himself. So Honk Fook said,

"All-light! You play, too. You catch-em one find China lady pletty soon, maybe one year, two year!"

Frank thought he understood a Chinese joke by this time, so he laughed a little and then forgot all about it. He lived through the banquet somehow, and when they got to throwing fingers for the gin, and weren't noticing, he got away and slept for nearly two days.

He never thought of the joke again until next China New Year's Day, when two swell China-

men came to his house with lilies and a bolt of fine blue silk, and a homely old vase that was probably worth its weight in gold to anyone who knew about such things.

"Plesent flom China wife," said Hong Fook.

Even then, Frank didn't guess what they were doing. He thought it was just their keen way of passing off a present on him so he couldn't refuse it. So he thanked them, with a straight face, and when they left, he bought a phonograph, and got a Chinese actor to sing into it, and sent it round to the Tong house, addressed to "Mrs. Frank Powell, Canton, China."

Next Christmas, he received a mandarin gold dragon ring, and a piece of jade that would be worth anywhere from a hundred dollars up. He sent back a cuckoo-clock next New Year's; and so it went on, back and forth, that way for a matter of three years.

Then one day the President of the Tong paid him an official visit. The minute Frank came into the room he knew that something was in the wind. Hong Fook had on his swellest dress clothes—long green silk coat, lavender breeches tied in at the ankles, embroidered shoes and red button cap,

complete—sitting up straight with his toes turned out.

The President began by inquiring about Frank's health, the weather and all, and then gradually let out the object of his visit. It nearly took Frank's breath away.

The Chinese wife was no joke at all. The Hip Suey Tong had taken Frank in dead earnest, and had bought a girl for him in Canton. She was a small-foot, merchant-caste woman, and they had been educating her for three years in all sorts of queer accomplishments. They had held a formal marriage by proxy, and, according to Chinese law, she was Mrs. Frank Powell No. 2.

But the Tong was getting impatient because Frank didn't send for her. It appears that people in Canton were talking about her because her husband wouldn't have her live with him, and they thought there must be something serious the matter with her. The family was in disgrace and losing caste, and her parents were furious. Something had to be done about it.

Well, if ever a man was hit on both sides at once, it was Frank Powell. He didn't know what

to do with her if she did come over, and if he didn't send for her, he would lose all his Chinese practice. The only thing he could do was to play for time. So he said,

"This is a very inconvenient time for me, Li Hong Fook. Would you mind waiting for two months, and then I will attend to it."

Well, there he was, with a good chance of losing about seven thousand dollars a year if he didn't square himself somehow. He told the story to Mrs. Powell, who was a good deal of a fool, and she made it worse than ever. She insisted that it was all Frank's fault, and he had been deceiving her, and threatened to go home to her mother's.

It was some time before he thought to ask Jim about it. Jim was a Christianised Chinese who had worked for the Powells for eighteen years, and was almost one of the family. You know what a good Chinese cook is—there are none better—and Jim was one of the best. He wasn't the kind that gets mad after three days, quits, and puts a devil-hoodoo-mark up over the kitchen door, so you won't be able to keep a China boy there until you've had the whole house painted. Jim

had run the Powell place ever since he went to work for Frank's mother. He not only bought all the provisions, jewed down the butcher, bossed the second girl, and fixed up the bill-of-fare for all their swell dinners, but he was really Frank Powell's silent partner in his law business. Jim always kept Frank posted on Chinese ways and the inside politics of Dupont Street. Frank would never have got into this marriage scrape if he'd only told Jim about it.

So, one day, Frank went out into the kitchen where Jim was having the time of his life, because there were seven extra guests for dinner, and he had a chance to spread himself on fancy dishes. Just then he was icing a big cake and printing the words "God is Love" across the top in pink frosting. He'd learned that in Sunday-School, and it struck him as appropriate to almost any occasion. He pretended not to listen to Frank's tale of woe, and said,

"Velly busy now. No good talk when wolkin'. You wait. To-mollow maybe. Velly busy now."

The next day Jim came in, all starched white linen—you know how everlastingly clean a Chinaman can look—and he said,

"How much money you give me I lose-em China wife?"

"Oh, most anything. How much d'you want, Jim?"

"Oh, maybe one thousand dolla', maybe two thousand dolla'. No can tell yet."

"You go ahead and do the trick, and I'll stand for what it costs," said Frank, for he had a big lot of confidence in that China boy.

Jim began to look over the room and handle the things on the mantel. Finally he took up one of those pink and gold china shepherdesses and showed it to Frank.

"You like-em this one pletty good?"

"Rotten!" said Frank. It was one of his wedding presents—we all have our troubles that way—he hated the sight of it, but he hadn't dared put it away because his wife's mother's second-cousin had sent it, and she was expecting money from that end of the family. He said the same thing about a number of other things, including an onyx clock and a brass stand. Jim smiled and didn't explain, but agreed to take on the job.

Next week Frank had to go up to Portland on a big deportation case for the Hip Sueys. It took

him about six weeks to get things straightened out. Before leaving, though, he had given Jim permission to do anything he wanted with the house, and he had notified Mrs. Powell not to interfere, if she didn't want a second wife in the house.

When he got back she was as mad as a hatter. Jim had been boring holes through the partitions, stringing wires everywhere, hammering nails in the walls, and what-not. She hadn't dared to say a word, but she was mad clear through. Frank himself was puzzled till Jim explained his scheme. Then Frank laughed like a fool.

In a day or so more Jim came to Frank and said,

"China wife, she come on stleamboat yesterday. Li Hong Fook he bling-em to-mollow. I fix-em!"

Frank was feeling pretty anxious when the next day, sure enough, the Hip Sueys drove up in hacks. The first carriage stopped, and out came an old, fat Chinawoman. Behind her was a Chinese girl, a little doll of a thing, not a day over fifteen. She was all bundled up in red silk and embroidery. You could hardly see her hair for the gold and jade ornaments, nor her face for the rouge; and under her green pantaloons were the littlest pair of feet in the world.

She jumped on the old woman's back; and Frank saw that his bride had come, sure enough, for every Chinese wife has to be carried into her husband's house the first time she enters. If she walked herself, she'd be no more high-toned than an ordinary big-foot woman, and if she should happen to touch the threshhold, it would bring seven years' bad luck.

Frank grinned, as though he were glad to see her, but he kept his eye on a piano wire that was stretched about an inch above the threshhold. The old lady stepped inside—and then tumbled all over herself and the little bride. In the confusion the wire—and Jim—disappeared together.

If there wasn't a row then! The Chinamen jumped on the old woman and pounded her until Frank had to pull them off. The girl cried like a waterfall, and Hong Fook swore till he was black in the face. There wasn't any need to tell the Tong men that she was going to bring bad luck! They jabbered over it a while, and then put the wife back into the carriage and drove off.

Frank was feeling pretty good about Jim's success, but the affair wasn't over yet, by any means. In about an hour the Hip Sueys sent up a band of

Chinese musicians to drive the evil spirits out. You see, the old lady had told the Tong men that a devil had caught her by the toe when she started into the house.

The priest and the six musicians proceeded to the moral fumigation of that house in a way that drew crowds. They sat in the Powells' front parlor playing two-string fiddles, and hammering drums and brass cymbals till Mrs. Powell had to leave and go to her mother's. Then they burned punk-sticks and incense all over the place, and pasted red papers up over the walls and on the front door, scattered prayer papers out of the window, and set out a roasted pig on the stoop. After they had kept up the racket for about four hours, and fired off about twenty thousand fire-crackers in a barrel in the dining-room, they went away. Frank's house by this time had become an object of interest to tourists, and what the Chinks didn't do, the hoodlums outside did on their own account.

Next day Frank was notified that his wife No. 2 would make another triumphal entry into his house that afternoon. Jim told him it would be all right, and both of them prepared to open on the show from their masked batteries.

The little girl toddled in alone, this time, followed by the Chinese committee. Frank was formally presented to his new wife. The girl had never been in a white man's house before, and she sat staring, smiling like a wax figure. Frank tried to be polite, and showed her his things. She seemed to be most interested in the big onyx clock, and he took her up to it to let her see the pendulum ticking. She reached out her hand to touch it—and smash! the thing toppled over and went all to pieces on the floor. The girl sat down and cried, and the Chinamen were so excited that they had no time to notice the hole in the wall where Jim had pushed his stick through. Frank told them it didn't matter, but they all looked pretty glum.

Then Frank led her to the window to show her the view of the Bay, and as she passed a brass stand it tipped over, carrying a glass globe of goldfishes with it. The next minute the carpet was covered with water, broken glass, and flopping fish.

Then the Chinks talked about having the band back again, and more fire-crackers and punks, but Frank put his foot down hard. While they were discussing the situation, a chunk of plaster fell from the ceiling and just missed Frank's bald head.

That made the Chinamen splutter worse than ever. Then a picture dropped off the wall with a bang that finished scaring them to death. Frank now considered that the time had come to put the thing to a vote.

"You see I can't have this woman," he said. "She's unlucky, and I'll probably catch the bubonic plague and die in four days if she stays with me!"

Then Hong Fook got up and surrendered. He said that the Tong washed its hands of her, too, that she was unlucky from her birth, and might her evil reputation blast the sacred memory of her grandmother and grandfather for a thousand weary years.

It was a deadlock and nobody knew quite what to do, till Jim came in and took a hand in the game. And then Frank tumbled to the true inwardness and capacity of the Chinese mind when adulterated with Christianity and civilisation.

"I fix-em!" Jim said. "You gib me China lady for my wife. I not aflaid of debble. Debble no can touch Clistian boy, saved by blood o' lamb. I mally China lady, what you think?"

It seemed to be a pretty good way out of the fix, and everybody agreed, especially the little

China girl, who had been watching Jim pretty hard. If I'm not mistaken, she had seen him before, and the thing was fixed up between them.

Well, that was the way the Hip Suey Tong paid Frank Powell for saving the white luck-joss, and how Frank Powell kept his Chinese practice. But, what's more to the point, that was how Jim, the Christian cook, got a $5,000 small-foot woman for a wife, free, and made about $2,000 to boot, just with a few gimlets and wires!

Yes, the more you know about Chinamen, the more you don't!

THE PLAISAUNCE

VIII

THE PLAISAUNCE

¶ HOW *Sir Tomas the Scalawag sought for La Beale Norine and encountered the Grand Commander. Of the mystic maze, and how Sir Tomas was sought to be enmeshed therein, while the scholard talked with a chapman: The Tale of Love Loquacious.*

IT was near eleven o'clock when Tom Parrish ran down the City Hall steps and walked briskly toward the northern part of town. On First Street the city was still gay, and to dodge the crowd he had to walk in the roadway. From St. James Park floated the last strains of the open-air band concert, and the crowd broke as he entered the leafy, shaded paths. On every hand the white costumes of frolicsome merrymakers glimmered through the dusk. Gay groups marched past, singing as they went; peddlers cried their wares; social parties of young folk shrieked and giggled on the lawns. The carnival spirit was wide awake this soft starry May night, and the revellers were boisterously happy. In the open

spaces the ever-shifting crowd came and went under the electric lights, but the shadows of the spreading trees hid affectionate couples enjoying themselves after a more quiet fashion.

Tom threaded the crowd, reached Second Street, and walked toward the railroad. Here the houses were larger and more pretentious, set about with well-kept lawns and gardens. Into one of these he turned. Running up the front steps, he rang the bell. A maid answered him.

"Is Mr. Lee at home?"

"No," said the girl, "he went out about an hour ago."

"Any word for Mr. Parrish?"

"He said he'd be at the Midway."

He thanked her, and started on a jog-trot for the street-fair. When he reached the place booths were beginning to close, but there were still visitors enough to warrant the more popular attractions in keeping open for another half-hour. The street, on either hand, was lined with cheap amusements and catch-penny shows. Men in front of tents were shouting slangy, picturesque invitations to view their marvels, vendors of refreshments cajoled the crowd,

while up and down couples and groups of boys and girls promenaded, gawking the painted posters. Women predominated even at this late hour; women and girls from the country, brawny, sleek and jocular, exchanging cheap badinage with roaring, prowling, grinning youths who carried toy ships and fancy canes.

Tom looked up and down, right and left, but caught no sight of a familiar face. He then started out to make a comprehensive tour of the fair. Some shows he entered, looked hastily about, and left to scan the street again. Some he investigated through the open entrance, parleying the while with the outraged ticket-taker. Some he passed by without a doubt.

Norine was not in the Abode of Mystery, nor the Haunted Swing, nor the Dutch Bierstube. She was not in the Acme Shooting Gallery of Costly Prizes, nor the Monster Calligraphic Studio, nor the home of Lolez, Wonder of the Universe. Nor was she riding on the Toy Railway, the Microscopic Miracle of Modern Times. The crowd diminished; the passers-by all made reluctantly in one direction, now, the girls munching California Fruit Tablets, the women dragging tired children,

the youths still sportive, but yielding to the panic of retreat.

He was standing on the platform of the Palace of Sweets, gazing down a side alley which led to the rear of the row of tents, when he saw a couple pass and disappear. The man was tall and blond, dressed in grey tweeds; the lady was heavily veiled. Tom whistled a call. They reappeared for an instant. He jumped down to follow them, and fell almost into the arms of the Grand Commander of the Knights of the Golden Gate, who had also been watching what Tom had seen.

Tom Parrish apologised and was off down the alley in a hurry, when, glancing back, he saw that the Grand Commander was coming after him. Tom turned in exasperation; for it was no part of his plan to have Norine seen by this inquisitive schoolmaster. So he barred the road, saying,

"Hail, Right Worshipful, whence goest thou?"

The Commander attempted to pass him with dignity, but it was impossible. "I've had enough of your impertinence, young man, and where I'm going is none of your business!" he said, stiffly.

The couple having now disappeared, Tom's one thought was to keep the Grand Commander away

from the pursuit, so he passed over the remark and said,

"I hope you don't really bear me a grudge for our little tourney this A.M.,—if you do, you can have your revenge by knowing that my machine was shipwrecked and had to be towed home, limping slightly in her off hind wheel."

Now the schoolmaster, too, was in search of Norine. Having failed at Golcher's, he had been turned from the quest for a time by the seductions of the Fair Unknown and now, at a loss for any definite clew, had happened into the Midway. The glimpse he had caught of Norine was his reward, and now he did not wish to share the glory of discovery with this impertinent red-haired youth. The same thought flashed across both minds; therefore they dropped their quarrel by tacit consent. The Grand Commander summoned up a grin. The expression was poorly manufactured for the occasion, but it did service for a symbol of amity.

"Oh, I guess we're quits on that, then, for my buggy was smashed to pieces," he replied.

"If you've nothing particular to do," Tom suggested, "let's take in the show together."

"Why, I think I've seen nearly everything worth

seeing. Isn't it about time to go home?" said the Grand Commander.

"Go home! Nonsense. 'Ah, what hath night to do with sleep?' Never go home when you can go to a better place! My pockets are reeking with gold which glitters. Come down Fakir Row and pretend you believe all you're told, and I'll show you things as they were in the paleozoic age. Come and see Flub-dub, the human perodactyl, wallowing in slime! Come to the house of Abdomida, the hootchy-kootchy queen! Why, I'll bet that there is material for seven thoroughbred nightmares that you haven't peeped at yet! Go home? Marry, no? Look at this abode of magic—the Mystic Mirror Maze! Have you been in, to see yourself reflected at forty-seven different angles of incidence? Come in and get tangled up with your counterfeit presentments!"

They stopped in front of a square shed where a large, dark man lolled at a ticket desk, viewing the few remaining sight-seers with an impassive grey eye.

"The Mirror Maze—really, I haven't cared to investigate. Some ingenious adaptation of the common laws of optics, I suppose," said the school-

master, wondering how in the world he could get rid of his garrulous companion.

Then a thought struck him. Perhaps he might go in with the lad, manage to lose him there, and come out alone—that would enable him to hurry off in the direction Norine had gone. He recalled the classic myth of Theseus in the Cretan labyrinth finding his way out by means of the clew of thread which Ariadne gave him. He might do the same ancient trick, and leave the unwitting Tom in the lurch.

"It must be a curious and interesting place," he said, taking a step toward the door. "Suppose we do look in for a little while. Allow me to pay, I beg you! It is indeed strange to find such a modern replica of the old-world fancies. Quite interesting, I'm sure! Quite. Yes, I would like to see if we are not astute enough to avoid the intricacies of the passages and gain the interior. It should be easy, I imagine, to anyone familiar with the rudiments of plane geometry."

So saying he led the way in and Tom followed with alacrity. Each of the two had the same idea —to give the slip to the other, then escape and look for Norine alone. But, while Tom expected to

avail himself of nothing but his common-sense and quickness of wit, the schoolmaster's method was characteristically elaborate.

As soon as they entered, he allowed Tom to go ahead. The young man darted forward and was soon lost behind a glittering angle of the mirrored walls. The schoolmaster drew a Fiesta programme from his pocket, and, tearing it to bits as he walked, threw the scraps, one by one, behind him. Up one passage and down the next he left his little white trail, like Hop-o'-my-Thumb. At last he had gone as far as he thought necessary, so he stopped and listened. All was still. He wondered at not hearing either Tom's footsteps or his voice, but the matting might muffle one and the many intervening walls the other. Tom was undoubtedly, he thought, wildly striving for the central chamber.

The place was lighted by electricity with seemingly an endless number of lamps. The Grand Commander, thanks to the mirrors, was enabled to catch a hundred full-length pictures of himself. He stood, like a figure of Conceit, entirely surrounded by himself, front face, back view, three-quarters and profile. He lifted a hand, and a hundred twin brothers mimicked his motion. He smiled, with a

placid satisfaction at his intelligence and good looks. A hundred other Commanders, equally Grand and Worshipful, indorsed him with smiles of approval.

Then, for such happiness cannot last forever, he started to retrace his steps to the entrance, and, thanks to his classic lore, succeeded. The manager of the Maze was awaiting him with impatience. "All out!" he said. "I'm going to turn off the lights! Your friend has gone, hasn't he?"

For a second the Grand Commander hesitated, and then summoned the lie. "Yes—he left a few moments ago—he said he couldn't wait." Having thus committed himself to the deception, he was anxious lest Tom's voice should be heard within, rising in protest when the lights went out. He hastily made his exit, and went directly for the alley where he had seen Norine disappear.

From here he saw a carriage waiting, some two hundred feet away, a tall blond man standing beside it, speaking to the driver. The Grand Commander recognised the grey tweed suit of Norine's escort, and was about to approach him, when the man jumped into the carriage and drove off at a smart trot. To follow it was hopeless, and, disappointed, he returned to the Maze to dis-

cover what had happened there. The manager was at his ticket desk, lingering about in a way that made the discovery of the schoolmaster's ruse probable at any minute. The Grand Commander found a balm to his injured feelings in a sudden hope that he might make Tom's detention in the trap permanent, and he thought with relish of the lad walking up and down the cold glass passages till morn relieved his torment. Hoping to give his enemy such a night, he approached the manager with unctuous affability.

As he did so, a last band of revellers swarmed past, yelling a street song, making noise enough to drown the cries of any victim imprisoned in the crystal prison-house.

"Wouldn't you like to have a bite of something to eat?" suggested the Commander to the manager. "I'd like to talk with you about your remarkable enterprise. I was much interested in its construction. I suppose it is copied from some of the celebrated labyrinths of antiquity, or possibly the maze at Hampton Court, for instance."

"Hampton nothing!" the manager replied. "I hired this outfit ready-made at Sacramento for the week. It ain't such a much. I don't go much on

the Maze business. It's too slow. I don't mind having a drink, if you say so, and a ham sandwich maybe."

"As you like, though I don't indulge in intoxicating liquors myself," said the Grand Commander, and, taking the man by the arm, he led him gently away, conversing learnedly the while.

"May I ask what your business or profession might be?" asked the Maze manager, awed by the talk. "You ain't a preacher, are you?"

"Oh, no," replied the Grand Commander. "I am a scholar—a pedagogue. I am called a Professor, though I can hardly claim a University chair. I am a teacher of Latin in the Santa Clara High School."

The manager became much interested. "I tell you what, an education is a great thing, I've always said. It puts ideas into a man's head, and ideas are good in any business. I'm a commercial orator, myself."

"I beg your pardon, I don't quite follow you," said the Latin teacher, puzzled at the term.

"A commercial orator—what is usually called in common a spieler—a barker—and sometimes even fakir, though we do no more faking than any

merchant does every day of his life. Commercial Orator is the official *and* correct designation of my line of business. This here Maze racket is only on the side for to catch the Fiesta trade. I took it off a man's hands that owed me something."

"Oh, I see. Yours is a curious profession, indeed. I have heard that you men become shrewd judges of human nature."

"Human Nature!" cried the Commercial Orator, "why, that's nothing but the A B C of the business. And the rest of the alphabet is talk, *or* conversation. The use of a dignified and entertaining argument or lecture to convince them that don't think for themselves. My business consists in being able to tell a man what he wants when he don't know himself. And what does it? Talk, *or* conversation."

"What do you sell?" the Grand Commander asked. By this time he felt quite safe, for they were turning into a refreshment booth, too far away for Tom's screams to carry.

"My line is the Chinese Herb and Root Rheumatism Specific, a sure cure for coughs, colds, gout, neuralgia, lumbago and all affections of the nerves and internal organs. I also carry the Little

French Detective which enables you to look over the top of a transom or round a corner. But it don't matter what it is, I've tried about everything, and I can sell 'em all. I believe I could pick up a cobble stone off the road and sell it to somebody, for it's our creed and theory that there's a sucker born every minute. Talk is my real profession—what I sell don't count much. But I do miss the advantages of an education!"

"Yes," said the schoolmaster, "an education is a great boon. It enables a man to rise to higher things."

"Right! Think of the new words and ideas you can get in a college! Think of the useful and entertaining facts you get next to, you can please an audience with! Why, look here! If I can make ten dollars a day selling the Chinese Specific, what couldn't I do with the advantages of a college education? Why, I would run into hundreds, thousands, maybe! But, Lord, people never seem to realise what they could do with the knowledge and information they get. I've heard Ingersoll and Horace Platt, and W. J. Bryan—all educated talkers—and when it comes right down to selling gold bricks I could beat any one of 'em out, to-day."

"Certainly, knowledge is power," acknowledged the schoolmaster as he ordered beer and a sandwich for the manager and ice-cream soda for himself, "an education enlarges a man's conversational gifts greatly."

"Conversation! Hell, no! There's nothing in it. It's a waste of good material. Why give away what you can sell? The best job I ever done was to change a conversationalist into a straight business talker."

"Yes? And how was that, may I ask?"

"Well, they's so confounded little talking necessary to this Maze graft, that it may relieve my feelings and keep my hand in if I tell you about it. Here goes!" And he plunged into

The Commercial Orator's Story

THE DEMONSTRATOR'S ROMANCE

Or, Love Loquacious

WHEN I first met Susan Handy, she was working in a Beauty Contest at the Chicago World's Fair, and I was selling the "Little Giant Wart and Mole Eradicator" just outside the gates of the Midway Plaisaunce.

They being short of good blondes, she was doing the Albanian Beauty from the Circassian Mountains, but later, when the Finnish Paragon ran away with the ticket-taker, Sue had to change her wig and flop the job. I don't know just which of the two costumes it was that nailed my heart to her, but I hadn't seen her many times before I caught the Handy complaint, which happened to be about the only disease I haven't sold remedies for, that are guaranteed and testified to be efficacious *and* reliable. I got the hankering for Sue Handy, and I got it as bad as it comes—chronic, with alarming symptoms that usually predict a general collapse, ending inevitably in marriage.

It was incurable; I had to have her; the fatal affection worked in through my system like malaria, giving me sweats and chills and a general irritation of the organs that yearn and hope.

But it wasn't the togs, nor the hair, nor the fact that she was such a favourite as to be able to guarantee at least forty votes a day in the contest—it wasn't them that laid me out. There was another factor in her general get-up that welded my heart to hers, the way you hypnotise a Rube from Mil-

pitas with a Patent Pain Pill. It was the fact *and* circumstance that here was a woman, and a good-looker at that, who was perfectly happy to sit in a chair for fifteen hours a day without indulging in the art and science of Talk. It was her superhuman power of holding her jaw—her resistance to the most harassing of female complaints—Conversation. A woman possessed of them qualities of mind and heart that will bless a home with beefsteaks mingled with peace, and home-made bread served in quiet and silence when a man wants to smoke and think—that was the brand of female I was after.

You know what I think of language. As a general thing, and as a commercial proposition, it's as much better than silence as night is more attractive than day, to most high-spirited folks. But talk is one of them things that can be overdone, and, handling it as I do, all day long, working it so as to pay on an average of four dollars a thousand words, I hate to see it wasted. I have use for every word I speak, and when it comes to living in the same house with a woman who thinks that guff is nothing but something that makes the pendulum of the clock go, why it just naturally jolts me.

I've suffered from free and extravagant talk in my time, and I know the evil effects on the human system of being subjected to too much language. It was my luck to have to live for twelve years with an aunt that spent twenty-five hours a day trying to convince me by argument that two and two was four. I left, and for a while I considered myself talk-proof, but incidents happened which showed me that superfluous and unnecessary words applied to the human ear out of office hours still lamed and bruised me. In my business, as Daniel Webster has said, talk is capital with a big C. And I wanted to control all the assets if I married.

So, having found a woman that could bottle her instincts to make heedless remarks, I was for marrying her. But before I had a chance or opportunity to even make her acquaintance outside of the show, the Beauty Contest busted, and while I was selling the Eradicator, Sue Handy vanished into the great unknown, as Robert G. Ingersoll says.

But I had bought a picture of the Finnish Paragon, and many a time nights I'd stand it up on the restaurant table and think what a great and good thing it would be for me if I had a live one like that to do the loving and tender, getting supper

for me the way mother used to cook it, and nothing about how Mrs. Higgly's chickens were all over the turnip patch, and how many men went by the house that afternoon, the story of every new baby, and how did I like her go-to-meeting gown, and if not why not? And sometimes W and Y.

When the Big Fair closed I worked north doing the Indian Doctor in spectacles and long hair, selling the Herbs of Life, a sure cure for Coughs, Colds, Catarrh and all affections of the Throat and Bronchial Tubes. I done a great business, and hired a coloured Jubilee singer to do turns on the banjo.

When I struck Minneapolis, there was a Seven Northerland Sisters' Hair Remedy outfit in a show-window, with a commercial orator on the outside, giving a good talk, as I soon acknowledged, though, as a rule, I'm hard to suit when it comes down to a high-toned and dignified sidewalk lecture. I admit I got some points, and, though I was of course listening more than seeing, it wasn't long before I became aware and conscious of the fact that the third Northerland Sister, counting from the tall end, was remarkably similar in form and figure to Sue Handy. They stood back-to, and of course hair

ain't so much of a proof, but after a while the row turned round front to demonstrate the treatment, and it really was Susy, all right. And as usual she had her mouth shut, a circumstance or incident that I didn't fail to notice *and* observe.

After the cappers had started the selling I hung around to see if Sue recognised me, but she was mighty careful not to show signs of life, and I had to brace the orator for an introduction, but he was leary of me, partly from professional jealousy,—I'm known as a household word all over that country—and partly, Sue tells me, owing to the fact that wigs are hot and you can't get a demonstrator to keep them on when they're not working. So I waited for a better chance.

Soon I heard the Northerland Sisters' concern was going to Milwaukee, and it was just my luck that I had covered that section with the Herbs of Life. But I was determined to follow the silent beauty, and so I sold out my stock, and bought up a lot of novelties, amongst which the best seller was a combination instrument that would do thirteen different things besides being an ornamental pocket-knife, and containing a small microscopical view of Niagara Falls by moonlight. Happy Sam, the

Plantation Banjo King, having been caught helping himself rather too freely to my small stock of snake medicine, I fired him and secured the services of a good, reliable glass-eater for a side attraction.

Well, sir, we made a flying finish into Milwaukee, cleaning their pockets and leaving the dusty remains all along the line. When I scrubbed up at the hotel and asked a few questions about the Northerland girls I found the concern had gone to pieces on the way, and where Sue was the Lord only knew. But I calculated that she'd be somewhere in town, and so I made a tour of the shop windows. Pretty soon, sure enough, I found her. You'd never guess her graft this time. She was demonstrating mackintoshes. Understand now?

Why, a guy had bought up a line of damaged rain coats from a fire sale in a job lot, and he had hired a store and was taking advantage of the rainy weather to close them out. He had the window rigged up with a tank bottom, and it was my Susy's job to stand there all day, dressed in a rubber coat and hood complete, with only her eyes showing, while water ran over her from the nozzle of a hose hitched to the ceiling. The thing took fine, and she had a crowd in front of the window all day

long. She didn't move, only her eyes, which turned regular every half minute, like they were clock-work, and she had the whole town guessing whether she was a real live woman or only an automata. It wasn't so comfortable as the Northerland work, and I never saw why she didn't catch her death of cold, but she did have on what was probably the only mackintosh in the lot that didn't leak. The fellow sold them like hot waffles.

Sue stopped her eyes for a half a second when she saw me, and I took that as an encouragement. But she kept her jaw shut, as usual, and I says to myself she won't escape me this time. Nothing venture, nothing have; a coward never made a fortune, as E. P. Roe says, and a faint heart never won a fair lady. So I decided to strike while the iron was hot.

I went in, and found out that the proprietor was an old friend of mine—Bledsoe, who used to handle a line of automatic indelible pencils all through Ohio—and I says,

"Hello, Bill, now's the time to get goods cheap, I s'pose, while they're going fast?"

He grinned. "Want a rubber coat?" he says. "I guess I can pick you out one in the back room

that ain't too full of holes, seeing you're one of the family."

"No coats for me," I says. "You ain't got but one thing in stock that suits me, but I've got to have that!"

"Name it," he says, "and I'll give you the trade discount."

"The name's Handy now," I says. "But if I have my way, it'll be changed in about two hours!"

"Oh, you won't get *her*," Bill says. "She don't go much on men noways."

I was mad, kind of. I says, "Well, if she don't like travelling in my waggon better than spending her life under a leaky hosepipe, making a wax-works dummy of herself for the yaps to stare at," I says, "then there ain't no virtue in my powers of persuasion. See here, Bill," I says, "you know me by name *and* reputation. You know what I've done in the business. You know I can talk the money out of a yahoo's pocket or the whitewash off a board fence equally as well. What in thunder did heaven give me the gift of gab for, if I can't remove the objections from the heart of a young and wishful female?"

Well, he introduced me that night, and I put up my talk without losing no time.

"Look here, Miss Handy," I says, "Henry Clay has said that a man without an object is like a ship without a rudder. I would not have permitted myself to come and gaze upon you on sundry and numerous occasions, nor would I be standing before you here and now, if I had no object. My acquaintance with you is short, but my powers of observation are large, and I have detected and remarked in you a true and loving nature or character that fits like a dove-tail into my own. I offer you an honest heart and a willing hand, and a bank account that never fails, for it lies in a jaw that has power to charm and beguile, also a life interest in the Jack-of-all-Trades pocket tool-chest combining in one and the same instrument thirteen distinct and separate useful and helpful tools for the workshop *or* household, not to speak of the view of Niagara Falls upon the inside. For references apply to my friend and contemporary, Bill Bledsoe. An early answer is requested, as we move out of town to-morrow."

She told me to call next day. I did so, and she took me. When it comes to an argument I always

win. At 9 A.M. I got my answer, and at 9.50 we were in the waggon moving toward Duluth, and the Justice of the Peace at Milwaukee had ten dollars in his pocket, and Bill Bledsoe a box of Superior Key West Cigars.

Marriage was one blissful dream for about two hours. It took about that long for the new to wear off of it for her, and for her to realise that now she'd struck a job that didn't require her to deprive herself of the pleasure of speech.

Then I discovered that I had married a conversationalist. Wasn't that a package to hand out to a man for a wedding present? It put icicles in my boots for the whole honeymoon. I was married to the exact and particular brand of woman I had been avoiding for a lifetime. She lifted up her voice, and I had to stand for it. What d'ye think of that?

Along toward night I saw I'd have to do something about it, or go crazy. I sat down alongside of her and put my arm around her in the way I had acquired a legal and proper right to do, and I voiced sentiments that pained and wounded her.

"For the Land's sakes!" she says. "Why, I only married you mostly to have somebody to talk

to! I thought you had to use your voice so much in the street daytimes, you'd be glad to listen! I've been working for three years," she says, "on jobs where I wasn't allowed to say a word in business hours, and you have no idea what a relief it is to have somebody to talk to by daylight!"

And then she bust into tears, which is about the only form of argument I ain't able to meet. So I passed it up, and let her go, and bore it as well as I could.

All the unspeakable thoughts and ideas she had saved up and suppressed while she was working in the Beauty Contest, and demonstrating for the Northerland Sisters, and at the Mackintosh Sale, and for Heaven knows how many years before that, she begun to let them out. It was like the leaking of a big dam. First would come out a few words at a time, like drops, then sentences, then chapters, then regular novels, and finally whole Public Libraries of talk. She didn't stop except for meals; I know she talked in her sleep. She seemed determined to cover the whole range of subjects that man's experience and wisdom has discovered, and she done it in a way that struck me as being durn fool.

Otherwise, I can venture to assert without fear

of successful contradiction that our married life was what a noted American poet has called "one long, sweet song." It was something like living to eat her cooking, and have your duds packed where you could find them when you moved, and Sue's looks were the kind that stand wear, tear and rust in any climate.

But to have to come at night and find her all swelled up with talk like a pink balloon got to be so trying I couldn't stand it. But she would have busted if she didn't let the conversation out of herself. She used language till I had to go to bed and sleep it off. If she couldn't tell a story four or five different ways, she seemed to feel that it wasn't done justice to. It was the extravagance of it that hurt me. Why, that woman used as good hot talk on me as if she was selling Alaska diamonds to a farmer! It is a curious and instructive scientific fact that one female mackerel or codfish lays upward of a million eggs a day. Sue was that way; for one idea, she'd produce about a million words. Gosh! It was awful.

I reasoned with her all I could, but it was no use. She only cried. Then I got so sick of it I didn't answer her when she asked me questions, and let

her run on alone. Then I used to stay away nights. It began to look considerable like divorce.

Finally, one day, Sue said she had a sore throat. Next morning she claimed it was worse. I wanted to call in a doctor, but she wouldn't have one. She grew hoarser and hoarser, till finally she couldn't talk at all! Then I was scared. She was as dumb as if she had been born without the power of speech. I thought it was a judgment on me for complaining. The first two or three days it was a blessed relief to have her so shy of talk that they was plenty of room in the air for the atmosphere; but when I found she couldn't talk I was just unreasonable enough to pine for her voice. That's the fool way men are built. Reminds me of the song happy Joe used to sing:

"As a rule, man's a fool;
When it's hot he wants it cool,
When it's cool he wants it hot,
Always wanting what is not;
—Man's a fool!"

So I called in Old Nat Hermistone, who happened to be in town selling the Marvellous Puritan Buchu Panacea and Liver Liberator, for besides

being one of the profession and as such to be encouraged, he was a regular doctor, graduated from a Correspondence School of Medicine in Iowa, and had effected some marvellous cures. He was a friend of mine, and it's safe to say he didn't prescribe Buchu Panacea. He looked Sue over, tapped her lungs and said it was a partial paralysis of the salivary glands and the mucous membrane combined with an inflammation of the epiglottis, or words to that effect. He give me a drug-store prescription in Latin and refused to charge. He said Sue'd come around all right if she got good nursing.

Well, as I say, I didn't seem to experience the sense and satisfaction of relief I would have expected had I known she was going to be struck dumb. I worried a heap, and when I got home nights, first thing I did was to go up to her and say, "Can't you speak yet, Susy?" and every time she just shook her head and smiled patient-like, and I'd kiss her.

I tried Dr. Sanger's Electric Treatment on her neck, but it was no good. Sue begun to complain by signs of pain in her throat. I was just fool enough to buy a magic talisman of a band of gipsies we met going through the town, and for a

while I thought it helped her some, but she got worse again. It went on so for four weeks till finally I couldn't stand it. It nearly broke me up in business, for I couldn't seem to keep my mind on my talk while I was on the street, thinking of Sue there at home, not being able to tell me how fond she was of me and all the little fool things a man don't miss till he can't get them any more. I didn't burn much gasoline on the corner them nights, but put right back home at sundown and tended on Sue, telling her funny stories and trying to brace up her spirits.

Well, one night I was pretty blue, for Sue was coughing hard, and I knelt down by her chair and put my arms around her and says,

"Oh, Susy, if I could only hear you speak again I'd be happy all the rest of my life!" And I meant it.

Then all of a sudden Sue up and says, as loud and natural as if she hadn't never had nothing the matter with her,

"Would you mind writing that down, James, so that I can keep it by me?"

Then I see the game. You talk about the power of the human will! Think of a woman holding her

tongue for four weeks on purpose to bring a man round to his senses! I tell you, we don't half know about women, yet. We'll never learn, neither. Women are certainly curious folks. We can't get along with them, and we can't get along without them!

Of course I was mad, but I saw the point, and I admitted my share of the blame, and it did me good. She never had to show me that paper I'd written, you bet. But I didn't lose anything. I just took them conversational powers of Sue's and I educated them by careful training so they could be used as a means of livelihood, instead of merely making the clock go, for amusement, you might say. Susy's the best female commercial orator in the business to-day, bar none. She makes a house-to-house canvass for the Boon to Womankind—Needle-threading Device and the Marvel Exerciser, while I handle the Chinese Specific in the street. We got the other outfits skinned a mile, and when we leave a town it means that every stocking's emptied and the tin banks shook out.

Say,—what d'ye think? I got a wonder of a youngster. Do you know, that kid could talk when he was five months old!

THE CARNIVAL

IX

THE CARNIVAL

¶ HOW *Sir Tomas the Scalawag brought a letter from La Beale Norine and rescued Queen Isyl from captivity. How heralds let cry a Masque of Unreason. Of a fool who usurped the throne and wooed the Queen. Of the unmasking, and how La Beale Norine was found: The Tale of Love Politic.*

AT the stroke of twelve Tom Parrish entered the office of the Chief of Police. Isyl was not surprised; her intuition had told her that he would not fail her. The Chief looked relieved, Bob Almeric expectant.

The young man drew a letter from his pocket, and, with a mock military salute, handed it to the boss. Almeric tore open the envelope and read the contents.

Then, striking the paper with his fist, he uttered an oath and got up to pace the floor, his face drawn in anger. No one dared question him, but the four witnesses of his excitement awaited in silence the coming storm, their eyes on his scowl. A word

then would have been dangerous, and Tom alone dared smile. But the old man's countenance gradually lost its tension, and, after a trying suspense, they saw his eyes twinkle, and a dry, cool smile creep forth. Then he turned to them, slapping his hand upon his knee.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he cried, "if that girl of mine hasn't got the makings of a politician, all right! I've run this county for fifteen years, and nobody ever got ahead of me before. It took a girl, and a girl of my own, you bet, to do it! I'm beaten. I lay down. She's a better worker than I am!"

"What's up?" the Chief now ventured to ask.

"Never mind, the whole town will know by to-morrow," said Almeric.

"And what about the ring?" Isyl inquired.

"The ring," the boss answered, quoting from the letter in his hand, "was presented to Thomas Parrish by my daughter in grateful recognition of services rendered to her on Thursday night at Golcher's road-house, and many other favours before and since." He turned to Tom. "I understand your favours. I had the pleasure of reading a little pamphlet of yours, I believe—I was much

interested in your ideas on matrimony. If Norine hadn't left it on my library table, things would have been different." He could not help laughing, nor could Tom, but Isyl was strangely puzzled.

"Well, then, Miss Shea, I guess you can go home now. I'm glad this matter has been cleared up," said the Chief.

"I don't see that it's cleared up at all!" Isyl said. "I think I ought to have an explanation myself!"

"Your friend can explain all he wants to, on the way home," put in the boss. "I've thrown up my hands. But as for you, young fellow, you've beaten me out, and I'll see you later. You're too smart for this town, and if you decide to stay I guess I'll have to pack up and go myself."

Tom smiled at the compliment and replied,

"Very good, sir. If I'm able to manage my own affairs as well as I do others' I'll send you my p. p. c. within a month, and leave you no rival to the title of the Smart Alec of Santa Clara County. You'll excuse me if I seem to tear myself and Miss Shea away. We have several light housekeeping questions to discuss."

"Go ahead! If you stay here a minute longer I

suppose you'll get me to make you Mayor of San Jose." Then, as the two disappeared, he nodded to the Chief of Police, and said, "That chap will stand a little watching, Jack!"

The Chamberlain had been ignored in this leave-taking, for Isyl was still too indignant at his conduct to accept his escort, even if Tom had not appeared to claim the privilege as his undoubted right. They got into the carriage; and Tom, without much trouble, gained possession of her hand.

She drew it away, however, to ask, "Tell me, first of all, Mr. Parrish, who was that Spanish-looking girl I saw you with to-day?"

He had tact enough to stifle a rising remark about "green-eyed monsters" and to answer simply, "Why, that was Dolores, our nurse-girl out at the ranch. She has executive authority over my two kid sisters. At least, that's who she was. From all I have seen and heard, I strongly suspect that now she's the future Grand Commanderess—the Mrs. Ardley to-be. She certainly has made a killing with the schoolmaster!"

Isyl gave a smile of relief, and her hand again glided dangerously near Tom's.

"The Knights of the Golden Gate told me such

a strange story—what was it about her being the cousin of a Spanish heiress who had run away? How did she happen to be shut up in Golcher's alone, anyway?"

"Oh, did you hear that? We cooked up that fairy-tale on the way out, while I was heading off the Knights. It's an old Mexican folk-story, cut over and trimmed up to fit the situation."

"But what was the situation?"

"That's part of the secret that I can't tell, yet. All you need to know is that Norine had to leave Golcher's in a big hurry, and it was up to me to get Golcher and his wife away, and hold the gay adventurers there till Norine was safe off. So we collaborated, said nurse-girl and I, and she did it very well indeed. That girl certainly ought to write for the 'Black Cat.'"

"But I don't understand it at all, even now!" said Isyl.

"You don't have to yet, little girl. You just give me Power of Attorney over your emotions, and I'll guarantee that they'll pay big dividends."

"I don't understand," Isyl repeated somewhat dreamily, "and Tom, the funniest part of it is that I don't care. It's all like 'Alice in Wonderland'

to me, and I'm perfectly willing to drift along till I wake up. But don't wake me up, please, Tom! I'm not clever at all. I don't know just what you're driving at, half the time, but I'm a woman and I have intuition. I know I can trust you. Why is it?"

"Don't you know why?" Tom asked.

Isyl did not reply. She did know, and she was drifting fast in Tom's direction. But she was supremely happy in his care, and the rest did not matter.

All that night she thought of it; of it and of him. The mystery of Norine's absence she did not try to fathom, but as it pointed everywhere at Tom, it was of him she dreamed.

She went through the next day mechanically, doing as she was told, wondering when and where she would meet him. Seated with her Maids of Honour at the Athletic Field Day sports, at the inevitable luncheon, on the way back, dressing for the evening festivities, it was the same. She got through with it somehow without having once seen her lover. It was a long, long day.

That night was set for the Carnival which was to end the Fiesta and her reign. At this masquer-

ade ball the Queen was to share the throne with Rex, King of Unreason, and, as it happened, a man whom she particularly disliked. She dreaded it.

By the time the royal coach and outriders had called for her, the town was running over with gaiety. As Isyl looked from the windows of her carriage she saw a romping, costumed populace let loose upon the streets. The Carnival was in full swing. Men with grotesque masks and women in domino and visor swarmed everywhere. They waved flags, showered confetti, laughed, shrieked and danced. Fire-crackers and tin horns made a hideous tumult. The coach had much trouble in passing through the crowd which had taken possession of the streets, and everywhere, as the Queen passed, she was hailed with shouts, surrounded by whooping maskers, and pelted with flowers till her outriders had to close in on rearing horses to protect her.

As they went under the electric-light tower on Market Street, a Maid of Honour pointed to a crowd more boisterous than any that had been seen before. It was coming in a wild procession, a herd of frolicsome youths in eccentric costumes, headed

by a masked captain dressed as a jester with cap and bells, hood and parti-coloured doublet. He led the way, slashing at wayfarers with a bladder on a stick, singing his orders to his motley retinue. This regiment of fools closed in behind the royal equipage and advanced on the Pavilion, growing more reckless every moment. As they were lost to sight by a turn of the Alameda, they were marching, arm-in-arm, some twenty abreast in a wavering rank, occupying the whole width of the street, sweeping all before them, the clown at their head haranguing them and inciting them to new abandon.

White with confetti, and almost torn to pieces by the madness of her welcome in the hall, Isyl reached her throne and the ball was opened. She was accompanied to the dais by Rex, King of Unreason, a collar manufacturer, whose sole qualification for the honourable position of Royal Consort was that he had subscribed a thousand dollars to the Fiesta fund.

He was fat and bald, and, the exertion having winded him, he heaved an audible sigh of relief to find himself out of reach of the mob. He wiped the perspiration from his brow, and then, having paid to be stared at, he assumed as kingly an attitude as

was possible, and began to bore his Queen. She would have preferred to be there alone, as she was on the night of the Coronation, rather than endure this creature's companionship; but as it happened she had not long to suffer.

The second dance was over. Rex, having failed to amuse the Queen, was ogling her Maids of Honour with small success, and Isyl was greeting a group of friends who had come up to compliment her, when a sudden irruption of visitors caused a tumult in the hall.

The masked jester in motley burst in at the head of his crew shouting "Revolution! Revolution!" and charged up toward the throne, sweeping the promenading couples right and left. The audience in the galleries craned their necks and gazed over shoulders to see what new folly was to come. Followed by his insane band, the fool made straight for the dais, leaped up in front of the throne and raised his hand for silence.

"Revolution!" he cried again. "Down with the lobster who has usurped the throne! Down with the fat skeleton of the feast! Down with the dub who rankles in our bosom! Down with Rex and up with Scalawag, King of Fools!" He made a

gesture at the cowering collar manufacturer, and the revolutionists leaped up and dragged the King down to the floor. Here he was stifled under a storm of confetti, and, twisted and man-handled, jostled and hustled, he was rushed out of the hall. He did not return. They tore his crown from his head, his sceptre from his hand, and bore the emblems in triumph to the jester on the dais. A cry of "speech! speech!" arose from all over the hall, and the tyrant stepped forth to reply.

"Friends and fellow-citizens, I thank you for this enthusiastic reception!" he commenced. "'If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me!' as Macbeth has truly said. Sorely against my will, I am compelled to accept this modest eminence and become the cynosure of all opera-glasses. Make merry, my subjects, during my brief but mellow reign! No sleep till morn, let joy be unconfined! Forget the sombre presence of the wooden Indian who sat upon my throne, in the delirious ecstasy of the twittering two-step! The Fiesta draws to an end—make that end sharp and pointed as an entry-clerk's lead-pencil! On with the dance! Remember I see you, and every frown shall be punished with a sentence of death! Who smiles

shall be made a count, who giggles a marquis, and who laughs aloud, a Duke! Make love and mischief merrily, till the gunpowder runs out of the heels of your boots! Forget sorrow while I reign here with Her Entrancing Majesty, Queen Isyl the First! Selah!!"

A salvo of applause greeted him; the orchestra struck up to an accompaniment of laughter and his fools scattered firebrands of mirth into the crowd till the place was afire with jollity.

At first Isyl had been terrified at the sedition, but the moment the jester opened his mouth she saw the plot and knew the usurper to be Tom Parrish. Who else, indeed, would have dared openly to defy the Court established by the 'Drag'? She welcomed him with a smile and an outstretched hand as he dropped to a seat beside her and removed his mask.

"Idiot," she said, softly, "what will you do next?"

"Next? Next?" he repeated. "Why, next I shall produce the royal favour and beg the promised forgiveness!" He reached inside his doublet and brought out her lace handkerchief.

"I have nothing to forgive, yet. I have only

thankfulness to you. This is the third time you have rescued me!"

"In the old fairy-book times," said Tom, "the youthful hero was given three quests, and—do you remember how he was rewarded after he had accomplished them all?"

"No," said Isyl, though a sudden blush convicted her of untruth.

"Shall I tell you?" he asked.

"No, no,—not yet," she cried, frightened at the prospect.

"Very well," said Tom, and he looked unutterably serious for a moment, a thing that frightened Isyl still more. She knew what was coming, now, but it was all so ridiculously soon that she dared not hear, dared not decide the question. She would infinitely rather it went on this way, vague and indefinite and mysterious, with a delicious prospect of possibly pleasanter to-morrows, but it was hard to put him off.

"Oh, it's not right for you to talk to me like this," she cried. "Just think what a short time we've known each other!"

"How about that blessed intuition of yours!" he asked. "Are you going to discount it now?"

"But I have common-sense as well!"

"Haven't you any uncommon-sense, too?"

"Yes—but——"

"Don't be afraid, little girl! I have a teaspoonful of intuition myself. It'll all come out right, don't you worry. You leave it to me, and I'll make an artistic job of the affair. You'll just let me hold your hand, shut your eyes, and it won't hurt but a moment. Then when you come to, your heart will be gone. Painless love made without the use of anæsthetics by Dr. Parrish. No pay unless cured."

"When did you first—first feel this way, idiot?" she said, continuing in spite of her resolution to suppress him.

"When I stood down there in the crowd and saw you crowned. That was the psychological moment when the lightning fell from Heaven. You see, I had taken a contract to look after you, so I did it. I promised to see that you had a good time. Did you?"

Isyl dared not answer.

"But there was no limit set, and so I suppose I'll have to do it for the rest of your natural life."

"Will it always be as nice as this?" she asked, with a more daring smile.

"Mostly better. I can guarantee my affection against moths, rust, frost, mildew and chilblains."

"What was your wish, when you put this ring on my finger?"

"That you'd be willing to wear it forever."

"But you said I must give it up when I was no longer Queen," she said, purposely misquoting him, in a way women will.

"That's easy. You'll always be a Queen." Obvious as was the remark, somehow Isyl thought it sounded better on Tom's lips than on the Grand Commander's.

They were now interrupted by visitors coming to greet the royal pair. As Tom was talking to them, Isyl, who had been scrutinising the crowd, touched his arm.

"Look there!" she said. "See those two just passing the door? It looks awfully like Norine Almeric! Do you suppose it could possibly be she?"

Tom looked and saw the couple. "Your Majesty," he said, so that all could hear, "they certainly are suspicious characters. Let us have them arrested by the Captain of the Guard and brought before us."

Isyl consented, and Tom, as King, ordered the pair haled before the throne. Two pages rushed across the hall and made known the royal command, bringing their prisoners. By this time a considerable number of spectators, drawn by the excitement, had collected about the dais. The two prisoners knelt in mock obeisance before the cosovereigns.

Tom arose and stretched forth his sceptre. "Minions," he said, "do Her Majesty's bidding and unmask the prisoners!"

In a second the masks were torn off. Norine stood before the throne, smiling gaily. Beside her was a tall Englishman, with a curly moustache.

"Oh, Miss Almeric, it is you, after all! Where, oh, where have you been all this time? You must explain it now!"

"No, indeed," said Norine, kissing Isyl's hand. "Your Majesty really is mistaken. Truly, I am not Miss Almeric!"

"Not Miss Almeric!" cried Isyl, "who *are* you, then?"

"I am Mrs. Montgomery Lee, if you please! Allow me to present my husband!" and both bowed again.

Isyl turned to Tom. "Why didn't you tell me before?" she demanded.

"I couldn't. I promised to keep the secret."

"When were you married?" Isyl asked.

"The night of the Coronation—at Golcher's," said the bride.

"Then it's all right? All except the ring—this is yours, isn't it?" And Isyl showed the sapphire.

"No, it is yours!" said Mrs. Lee, and then she came nearer so that the rest might not hear. "I do hope you'll keep it, Isyl! I can recommend him fully."

Tom grinned again and murmured in Isyl's ear, "warranted not to warp, fade, stretch, shrink, or wear out at the heels."

Many people now crowded about the bride, congratulating her and asking endless questions. The news spread over the hall like wildfire, and soon she was surrounded by eager, astonished friends.

From this tumult Montgomery Lee rescued her with difficulty. "I say," he announced, "don't you know, I expect we are getting to be more prominent than if you were Queen after all! Suppose we adjourn to the supper-room and talk it over there. I'm beastly hungry, myself, and if we can

only get off by ourselves, Norine will tell you the whole story while I eat."

The crowd was finally evaded, and the Queen led the way with Tom to the supper-room. But, despite Isyl's request, Norine would not take the place of honour at the table reserved for the Court.

"No, I renounced the throne and all its pomp and glory to become plain Mrs. Lee. None but a maiden should be Queen of Youth and Beauty, and Isyl shall keep her place."

The supper proceeded gaily, Norine's explanation being kept till the last. Tom sat beside Isyl, he in motley and she in her royal robes. They were so absorbed in each other, so patently happy, that more than one person at the Court table glanced at the two and smiled.

He was describing to her his ridiculous adventure in the Mirror Maze,—how, darting behind the first corner he had allowed the Grand Commander to pass him, how the Commander, absorbed in his ruse, dropping his scraps of paper had gone far ahead and allowed his victim to escape immediately—when Isyl and Tom were aroused from their conversation by the call of "story! story!" from the Court.

All eyes turned to Norine, now, and, the general talk having subsided, she began the history of her love affair with "Gummy" Lee.

The Queen-Elect's Story

THE COERCION OF PAPA

Or, Love Politic

IN some ways, papa's funny. He knows men pretty well—that's his business,—but he really knows no more about women than a boy of ten. I suppose it's because my mother died so long ago, when I was born. Of course he thinks the world of me and he's awfully proud of me, so much so that it's often embarrassing. When I was only four years old sometimes he'd send up for me and have me brought downstairs, to show how smart I was. He'd put me up on the dinner-table, in my night-gown, and bet I could walk down the whole length of the table-cloth without touching a dish or tipping over a candlestick. When I was seven I could play "Boston" almost as well as he could, and he used to be tickled to death when I beat his friends.

But you know how it is, usually, when a father spoils his child. He gives her everything she doesn't

want, and when it comes to something that her heart is set on, she can't have it. That's the way it was with me, and I've had to manage papa ever since I began to take notice. Sometimes I can do it by jollying him; for papa thinks I'm funny, amongst other foolish things he's proud of. Until I was eleven, all I had to do to get almost anything I wanted, was to make up an awful face, and papa'd howl at the joke and let me have my way.

But the things I've really wanted most of all, of course he wouldn't let me have. I wanted to go to Wellesley College, and I did my best to persuade him, but he simply couldn't stand the idea of my being way off in Massachusetts for so long, and I had to go to Stanford University instead. Papa thought I didn't care, when he gave me two new dresses to make up for my disappointment, but I felt pretty bad about it.

I'm glad I went to Stanford for a great many reasons; mostly because if I hadn't, I probably wouldn't have met Mr. Lee, and I wouldn't be Mrs. Montgomery Lee to-day. But I might have met him, and still not be Mrs. Lee now, if it hadn't been for Tom Parrish. His wedding present was the only one I got, when I was

married, and it was the best kind of one—a husband.

I've known Tom for a long time, ever since he was a boy on his uncle's ranch. He was two years ahead of me in college, but we were good friends there. He and I led the Junior Prom, and we had what he used to call an "offensive and defensive alliance against the square-heads"—which simply meant that when I needed a man to help me out, he was ready, as I was ready to help him, if he needed a girl-friend. You know that Tom was probably the most popular man that ever went to Stanford, and for that reason, after he left, he became a kind of college myth. Every funny thing that ever happened was told with Tom Parrish as the hero, and if it wasn't true, it was at least probable, for if there was any mischief there he was usually in it. So, when he came back to the Quad, as he did occasionally, he was treated as a sort of demi-god by the undergraduates, and Freshmen would boast of having shaken hands with him.

It was in my senior year that J. Montgomery Lee came to Palo Alto to give a series of lectures on "The Influence of Greek Ideals on the Pre-Renaissance Period." You would never have thought

that a madcap like Tom would become such good friends with an Oxford Senior Classic, but the two men seemed to take to each other from the start—I suppose it was because they were so absolutely different. Tom was calling Mr. Lee "Gummy" the second time they met. The new Englishman was introduced to me, of course, according to the rules of the "Offensive and Defensive League," and Gummy soon became a member of the alliance. He was about as far from being a typical college professor as you can get, without coming to Tom Parrish. But then, of course, Mr. Lee was never a member of the faculty, only an extra lecturer for one semester.

Tom went back to his ranch, but Gummy stayed at Palo Alto the whole winter, and by Christmas he and I had come to an understanding. This isn't a love story, but politics, so I won't say any more than that my candidate for husband was nominated and unanimously elected at the stile in Lover's Lane, over by the Stock Farm. There was very little opposition from me, and Tom Parrish ratified the election at a rousing meeting. The bill was now ready for papa to sign, and we had every expectation of a veto.

Papa had never heard of J. Montgomery Lee, of course, and so, to find out where he stood upon the important question, I got him down to Stanford and insisted upon his going with me to hear one of Gummy's lectures. It happened to be Botticelli and Fra Angelico that day, and, if you know papa, you can imagine what a hit Gummy made.

After it was over, I waked papa up and asked him if he didn't want to meet the lecturer.

"No, I do not!" he said, "that young fellow is beyond repair."

Of course I saw that I hadn't gone about it right, but I was mad and told him how clever Gummy really was, an Oxford don and all that, which only made papa worse. He called Gummy a remittance man, and made fun of his clothes and his accent and his eye-glass. I said he was handsome, and papa said,

"Handsome is as handsome does, and that Britisher would get handsomely done in San Jose!"

I said that he talked beautifully, and papa asked why he didn't learn the American language? The case looked hopeless, and I felt pretty badly about it.

I sent for Tom, then, and the "offensive and

defensive alliance" went into executive session. Gummy wanted to go right to San Jose to see papa and ask his consent, English fashion, but Tom stopped that.

"See here," he said, "what we've got to do is not to deal with the father, but the politician. Mr. Almeric, as Norine will tell you, is the sort of blindly doting parent that will give his daughter anything except what she wants most. This thing can't be done in an interview—it's a campaign! We've got to fight fire with fire. We've got to beat him at his own game. It will never do for you to want Norine; Mr. Almeric has got to want you! If he finds you're not for sale, he'll employ the same methods he's used for fifteen years to bring his opponents to terms. And he always wins. My motto is: 'Be coy, be coy; but not too coy.'" As for you, Norine, all's fair in love and politics; you've got to disguise the naked truth and do some scientific weeping."

He gave us his scheme, and, after he went home to the ranch he sent back type-written instructions, bound into a funny little pamphlet with the title, "How to Win a Husband Under Difficulties: A Key to Political Courtship. By T. Parrish, Esq.,"

and as we had nothing better to try, we took Tom's ridiculous advice.

My first move was to give papa the idea that Mr. Lee was immensely important and was made a great deal of at the University, which was mostly true, and then I told him that I had tried to get introduced to Mr. Lee, and had been badly snubbed. I made Gummy act this out, so it wouldn't seem like quite so much of a fib. This worked very well. Papa was indignant.

"Wouldn't look at you, eh? I'd like to know why my daughter isn't good enough for any English tourist that ever came over on a Cook's Excursion! Snubbed you, did he? You're too good to wipe your feet on the Prince of Wales! Dines with the Pendragons? Pshaw! Don't I dine there too? I've got Pendragon in the palm of my hand. I'll bet we dine there within two weeks."

And so we did. I don't know how papa managed it, but Gummy was there too, and if you ever saw a horrid Englishman, he was one. He acted just the way they do on the stage, except that he didn't have side whiskers, and he did wear evening dress instead of tweeds. He got into a discussion with papa, and told him just what he

thought of American politicians. He said no Englishman could ever be bribed.

On the way home papa was furious. He said he'd have that Briton on his knees before long, and there was more than one way to get hold of a man without buying him.

Amongst other things we talked about at the Pendragons' was some old Spanish manuscripts at Mission Santa Clara, and Gummy had said he'd like to see them. Of course, it was considered impossible to obtain them, for they were thought a great deal of by the priests. But what did papa do but work his Catholic friends, and he got the manuscript books, and sent them over to Mr. Lee with his compliments, and said he'd be glad to give him any assistance if he wanted to look up the early California records. Gummy was pleased, for he had use for the papers. But he was more pleased, and so was I, that papa had swallowed the bait.

The next thing Gummy said to me in fun, at Tom's request, and I repeated it to my papa in earnest, was that, while he was willing to have official dealings with a political boss, he couldn't meet him socially. Papa went up in the air when I told him. It was really awfully funny, though I hated myself for

doing it. But I was bound to win. I suppose there's a chip of the old block in me.

Papa wrote immediately and invited Gummy to dinner, and Gummy sent back regrets. Then papa had him put up for membership at the Santa Clara Club, and elected over the heads of about a hundred applicants for admission on the waiting list. Gummy joined, and bowed stiffly to papa when they met. Meanwhile we were seeing each other as often as we could at Tom's ranch, and I was crazy to tell papa the truth about it, but Tom held us back. I suppose he had begun to take a kind of pride in his management, and wanted to have the fun of it. One day Gummy was driving me home in his buggy, and we saw papa coming our way. We had no time to turn round, and I had to drop down on the floor behind the lap-robe and cover myself up so that papa wouldn't see me.

"Say, Lee!" he said, as he pulled up his horse, "wait a minute, won't you? Can't you come over to my place to-night and take pot luck? I'd like you to meet my daughter—perhaps you'd like her better than you do me. She's a nice little girl, if I do say it. Have you ever seen her at Stanford's?"

"Why, I don't remember, really, I see so many

young persons there," Gummy drawled. "Oh, she has red hair and freckles, hasn't she?"

I just pounded his leg, and then stuck a pin into it, for it struck me he was going a little too far. I was afraid papa would strike him, too, but no—papa just took it, and acted so like a managing mamma that I was positively ashamed.

"Why, I think she's pretty!" he said. "She's a tidy little woman."

"Sorry, don't you know, but really, I doubt if I can find time to-night, Mr. Almeric," Gummy said. "Women rather bore me. American girls strike me as being so frivolous, don't you think?" I stuck the hat-pin into him again, and he drove off in a hurry. Oh, I was mad! He had done it altogether too well, and he had to kiss every one of my freckles before I'd forgive him that horrid remark.

Now, you'd think that was pretty crude work, wouldn't you? You'd think that papa would be so mad he'd never have a thing to do with Gummy again. I did, anyway, and I hardly dared go home and see him. But what d'you think? Papa was more determined than ever that he'd have Gummy at the house. You see, he just *has* to have his own way, and when anybody baffles him, he thinks

of nothing in the world but to win. No managing mamma with an overgrown daughter to marry off could have acted worse than he did. If it hadn't been that Gummy understood, I'd have died of shame.

Next day papa got me to go buggy-riding, and the first thing I knew we were turning into the Lees' place. Papa insisted that he had to go in on some Prune Association business. What he really wanted was for Gummy to see me, for before we started he had told me what dress to wear, and had insisted that I do my hair over again. Just before we got to the Lees' door, he stopped and said:

"See here, little girl, I want you to invite this Lee to dinner, if you get a chance, and I guess if you do it, he can't refuse. If he says he can't come, you ask when he can, and get him to set a day." The boldness of it made me positively blush, but it was only Gummy and I didn't care much.

Well, I winked at Gummy, and he accepted the invitation. Papa spent a lot of money on that dinner, and got a lot of the swellest people he knew to come, and put Gummy at my right hand. Gummy flirted outrageously with the girl on the other side, and hardly spoke to me during the dinner. After

all the guests had gone, I slipped down on a sofa and began to cry. I didn't have to try very hard, either, for the whole thing was wearing on me, and Gummy did seem to be remarkably interested in that other girl.

Papa came over to me and tried to soothe me. "Brace up, little girl," he said, "he did treat you pretty bad, but he'll come round all right. You don't really care for him, do you?"

I said I did, and I tell you I was glad that there didn't have to be any more make-believe. Papa swore that if I couldn't get the man I wanted, he'd find out the reason why.

So we went on, Gummy getting gradually warmer and thawing out of what papa called his British reserve. He would have had a different idea of British reserve if he had caught us two together oftener. Papa would invite Gummy to the theatre, and leave us two in the box alone for half the performance while he talked politics in the lobby. Then he began to advise me how to manage Gummy, and if I had taken his advice I would have thrown myself at his head like a shop-girl. Papa said I didn't encourage the man enough. That man didn't need much encouragement, you had

better believe. We just got off the sofa in time to be on opposite sides of the room when papa came in, more than once! And papa was as innocent as a child of what was happening under his very eyes. Once while he was reading, facing us, with the newspaper in front of him, Gummy kissed me right there! And after Gummy went, papa said Englishmen were so slow they made him tired!

When papa got Gummy a political job, we thought the time had come for the denouement. He had Gummy appointed State Translator, which is the only office an alien can hold in California, and it was an easy place with a good salary. As soon as this was settled, Gummy dropped the mask, and began to come to see us regularly, and finally, after a month or so, he went to papa and formally asked for my hand. Papa came to me with the news, thinking Gummy was so British that he would ask the parent's consent first. He was smiling all over, just as if he were bringing me a new doll, and I blushingly informed him that I accepted the alliance with J. Montgomery Lee. He took me up in his arms the way he used to when I was a little girl, and said, "Ah, I thought I would bring him round, if I played him right!"

X

EPILOGUE

¶HOW *La Beale Norine finished her tale, and the Queen was affianced before the Court.*

NORINE had gone so far when she was interrupted by Tom, who had seen something at the other end of the room that justified his breaking into the narrative.

"Just wait a moment, Norine!" he exclaimed. "Look over there! If there isn't old man Golcher after all! We must have him over here in the whirl, the old cynic!"

He went over to the doorway where Golcher stood gazing jovially at the merriment, and both soon returned to the Court table. Golcher, to everybody's surprise, was in costume, and, when they looked at him, unmasked, they recalled the lively abandon of a masked policeman on the dancing-floor.

"You must have experienced a pronounced change of heart," said Tom, as they sat down.

"I did!" said Golcher. "I did, because I had

to. This ain't my doin's, it's the old lady's. She's out in the hall yonder, gossipin'. She wanted to come. She put her foot down, an' I was under that foot! So I come along, an' hired this rig, seein' I might as well be hung for an old sheep as a lamb. I don't know but I'd be willin' to admit now, that my idees on Fi-estas has changed some. I ain't enjoyed myself so much since I broke my leg!"

"What converted the strategic Mrs. G.?" asked Tom.

"I expect it was what happened to the house, an' the sight o' the queen's togs an' all. You druv us out o' house an' home, anyway—we might as well come up here an' see the fun as well as go an' be talked to death over to my wife's relations, I expect. But don't let me interrupt the ceremonies. You seemed to be havin' a pretty lively time over somethin' as I looked in the door."

"Yes!" cried the Chamberlain to Norine, "you haven't explained why you ran away with Mr. Lee, when your father was so agreeable to the match. Why did you leave us in the lurch at the last moment?"

"Ah, there's a tragic Envoi to that tale," said Tom.

Norine giggled. "Indeed there was! I happened to leave a type-written pamphlet entitled 'How to Win a Husband, etc., by T. Parrish, Esq.,' on my writing-desk, and papa came across it. It looked amusing, and he read it. It was awful! He saw through the whole scheme, then."

"And the air was filled with fireworks and flying fragments of J. Montgomery Lee," added Tom.

"Yes, Gummy didn't have a leg to stand on," said Norine.

"I jolly well lost my billet as State Translator," said the young husband, twirling his moustache.

"I remember!" chimed in two or three male members of the Court. A recent mystery in local politics was thus cleared up.

"Papa was simply furious, of course," Norine went on. "He swore that I should not marry Gummy as long as he lived. I haven't seen him so mad since he lost the State Senatorship! Then he made me run for Queen of the Fiesta. I didn't want to do it but I had to, and of course I was elected. I swore to myself that I'd never take it, and the 'offensive and defensive alliance' cooked up the scheme for me to elope that night with Gummy. First, because papa had made me be queen, just, as

he thought, to keep me out of harm's way, and I wanted to show that I couldn't be managed like a child. Second, because we could be sure that everybody would be busy about something else, and third, because I knew Isyl ought to be Queen, and she would make a prettier and better one than I would."

"And fourth," added Tom, "to save us all the trouble and expense of buying you silver ice-cream spoons and cut-glass salad bowls for wedding presents. I tell you, many a school-marm in the County has saved her little old two and a half that would have been chipped into a pool to buy you a Rogers statuette!"

"And what did Tom do?" Isyl asked.

"Everything!" said Norine.

"Except marry her," Gummy Lee insisted.

"I personally conducted the punitive expedition," Tom explained. "I hired our friend Golcher's house for the scene of the tragedy, I got Parson Jones to preside, and, when the fatal plunge was over, I hiked back to act as steering committee for the involuntary Queen, and there I met my doom."

Gummy Lee arose and held his wine glass aloft. "Gentlemen, the Queen, God bless her!" he cried.

The health was drunk with a tumult of cheering. Then, as they took their seats again, the Grand Commander, who had edged his way to the table, snapped his watch and remarked:

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is twelve o'clock. The reign of Queen Isyl is over!"

Old man Golcher arose deliberately. "Young feller," he cried, smiling with indulgence at the Queen and the Jester, "you happen to be dead wrong, this time, *as* usual! It looks to me like the reign of Queen Isyl had just about begun!"

The End